

# THE ARGOSY.

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## THE ENGAGEMENT OF SUSAN CHASE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### LIEUTENANT CARNAGIE.

A LADY and gentleman were pacing a covered walk one dull day in November. Both were young : he had something of a military air about him ; a tall, thin man, very dark. She was fair, with a calm face and pleasant expression. Just now, however, her features were glowing with animation, her cheeks burning, and her eyes cast down ; for he, Charles Carnagie, had been telling her that he loved her ; and she would rather have his love than that of the whole world beside.

Lieutenant Carnagie had come on a visit in the neighbourhood. He had accidentally met with Susan Chase the very first day of his arrival, and he had contrived to meet her pretty nearly every day since, now some weeks, so that love had grown up between them. A gossiping letter, received that morning from a brother officer, spoke of a rumour that their regiment was about to be ordered to the West Indies : and this had caused him to speak out.

"You know, Susan," he said, "I cannot go without you."

A deeper blush still, then a troubled expression, and she half raised her eyes. "Mamma will not consent to that ; she will say I am too young."

"Susan——" laughed Mr. Carnagie.

"Yes. Well?" for he seemed to have found some source of amusement, and laughed still.

"Do you remember the other evening, when the Maitlands came to tea, and the conversation turned on marriage, your mamma informed us she was married at seventeen. You are eighteen, so she cannot consistently bring forward your youth as an objection."

"Yes ; but she also said that early marriages were——"

"That early marriages were the incarnation of imprudence and impropriety," interrupted Mr. Carnagie, "laying the foundation for all the disasters that flesh is heir to; from an unconscionable share of children, to a ruined pocket and wretched health. My dearest Susan, we will risk them all, and cite her own example when she holds out against us."

"Look at the rain!" suddenly exclaimed Miss Chase, as they came to an opening in the trees. "How long can it have begun?"

"It's coming down pretty smartly too. There are worse misfortunes at sea, Susan. We can turn back again, and wait its pleasure. You are under shelter here."

"But indeed I dare not stay longer. I wonder what the time is. Will you look, please?"

Mr. Carnagie took out his watch. "It is on the stroke of twelve."

"Twelve!" she exclaimed, in astonishment. "*Twelve!* Charles, we have been here an hour and a half. What will mamma say?"

"Nothing. When she hears what we have to tell her."

"Oh, Charles! I only went out to take a message to the cottage. And she knows I might have been back in ten minutes. Indeed I must hasten in."

He opened his umbrella, which he had brought with him, for rain had been threatening all the morning; and, causing her to take his arm, held it over her. She walked timidly: it was the first time she had ever taken it: and the moment they came within view of the house, she relinquished it.

"Susan, what's that for?"

"Don't you see mamma at the window?" she faltered.

"Yes; and I see that she is looking at us. Come, Susan, take courage; a few minutes more, and she will know that it is all as it should be."

Mr. Carnagie took possession of her hand, intending to make it again a prisoner; but Susan drew it away, and hurried off in the rain, leaving him and his umbrella to follow at leisure.

She bounded into the hall, out of breath. Her mother came and met her. Mr. Carnagie was not far behind.

"Susan, where ever have you been?" exclaimed Mrs. Chase, motioning her into the sitting-room. "What has detained you?"

Of course she had no excuse to offer, and she murmured something unintelligible; Mrs. Chase only caught the word "rain."

"Rain! you could not have waited for that. It has only just commenced. Where is it that you have been, Susan?"

"I believe I detained her, Mrs. Chase," spoke up young Carnagie. "I was coming here, and met her, and we have been walking in the covered walk."

Politeness kept Mrs. Chase silent. But she did not allow her daughters to walk with young men, either in covered walks or uncovered, and she mentally prepared a lecture for Susan.

"Susan has been making me a promise," resumed Mr. Carnagie, folding and unfolding a piece of paper, which he took up from the table.

"Not to go out walking with you again, I hope," hastily interposed Mrs. Chase. "For I cannot sanction it."

"Not precisely that. Mrs. Chase, she has promised to be my wife."

Mrs. Chase was taken entirely by surprise. A chest complaint, from which she suffered constantly, caused her to be much confined at home, rarely, if ever, to accompany her daughters in their walks or evening visits; therefore she had seen little of the progress of the intimacy. Susan sat down on the sofa, and drooped her face, and nervously played with her bonnet strings.

"Conditionally, of course," added Mr. Carnagie, "that you have no objection to offer. I trust you will have none, Mrs. Chase."

"Dear me! this is very sudden," was all that lady could find to utter aloud.

"My family—I believe you know—are of great respectability; and I possess a few thousands besides my commission. I will try to make her happy, Mrs. Chase."

"I have heard you highly spoken of by Sir Arthur, Mr. Carnagie. But still—you must allow me to consider this seriously, before giving a final answer."

"Oh, certainly. I did not expect anything more. If you will kindly not take too much time," he added, "for I believe there will be little time to spare."

"I do not understand you," said Mrs. Chase.

"I had a letter from Drake, of ours, this morning, and he tells me there's a rumour that we are to be sent off to the West Indies."

"And you wish for an answer before you leave. That is natural. You shall have it."

"My dear Mrs. Chase—I wish for *her* before I leave. I must take her with me."

"Take—are you speaking of Susan?" uttered the astonished Mrs. Chase.

"Of course I am. Several of our officers are married men, and their wives will accompany them out."

"If Susan were older I would not say you nay: only three or four years older."

"I cannot go without Susan. I never could endure to leave her behind me, with nothing more binding between us than an engagement: I might have to stop out there for years, before I could get leave to come home and claim her. Dear Mrs. Chase, if you are satisfied with me in other respects, you must give your consent to our being married at once."

"Mr. Carnagie! Do you know Susan's age?"

"Yes. Eighteen. And you," he added, with a half smile, "were seventeen when you married. I heard you say so."

Mrs. Chase looked vexed. "True; that was my age," she answered: "and it is that very fact which has set me against early marriages for my children. They are a great mistake.—Susan, where are you going? Stay and hear what I have to say: it is now fitting that you should do so. Sit down again. I have scarcely enjoyed a day's peace since I married, Mr. Carnegie. I had many children, and have had nothing but worry, noise, bustle, toil! Oh, you don't know the discomfort of early marriages: and I almost made a vow that my daughters should not marry until they were of a proper age."

"May I inquire what you would call a proper age?" he asked, suppressing a smile.

"Well—I think the most proper and the best age would be about five-and-twenty. But certainly not until twenty was turned."

"Susan wants only two years of twenty. Dear Mrs. Chase, I must plead that you change your resolution in her case. Were I stationary in England, and could occasionally see her, it might be different. I must take her with me."

"You are not yet sure of going."

"No, I am not. Drake thought——"

"We will not discuss it further for the present," interrupted Mrs. Chase.

"You have nearly startled me out of my sober sense and judgment."

"Very well. May I come in to-morrow morning?"

"If you like. I will then say yes, or no, to the engagement: but without reference to the marriage."

"Now mind, Susan," he snatched a moment to whisper, "if your mother still holds out, and vows we must wait an indefinite number of years, we will not wait at all, but just elope, and settle it that way. It's most unreasonable of her. I can't wait for you, and I won't."

Susan smiled faintly. She was not one of the eloping sort.

The next morning came. Mrs. Chase had resolved to accept Mr. Carnegie, finding that Susan's "mind," as she called it, was set upon him; and indeed there was no reason why she should not accept him: but when Mr. Carnegie came, she found there was something else to be settled. He had received a summons to join his regiment, which was then quartered in Ireland, and also a positive, though not official notification, that it was ordered to the West Indies, and would be away in two months. Now, was Susan to go with him or not? Mrs. Chase said no, he said yes: and after much argument on both sides, and some slight indication of relenting on hers, they somehow came to the conclusion that Susan herself should decide the matter.

"My dear, decide *prudently*," cried Mrs. Chase. "Think well over all the fatal objections I have pointed out. Prudence, mind!"

"Susan, my darling, decide bravely," cried he; "don't be afraid. Think how happy we shall be together!"

And poor Susan, amidst a rush of colour and a flood of tears, decided to go.



"Oh, dear!" groaned Mrs. Chase, "there will be no time to prepare you a suitable *trousseau*, Susan."

"No time!" echoed Mr. Carnegie. "I could get an outfit made and packed in three days, and Susan has twice as many weeks. I should think she might buy up half the shops in Great Britain, in that time."

Mr. Carnegie made the best of his way to Ireland, and Susan made the best use of her hands and energies in preparing for her change of prospects. In seven weeks they were to be married, and in eight to sail. Mr. Carnegie had interest with his colonel, and had no doubt of obtaining another short leave of absence. During this time Mrs. Chase had Susan's miniature taken—to console them, she said, when Susan should be gone. It was a good likeness, but it flattered her. Susan wrote a merry account of this to Mr. Carnegie.

One day, when Susan's friend, Frances Maitland, had come in to help her with some delicate work, she began speaking of the disposition of Mr. Carnegie.

"Susan, tell me: do you believe he is, on the whole, calculated to make you happy?"

"Is there any reason why he should not be?" was Susan's answer.

"He is so fearfully passionate."

"Who says so?" demanded Susan, in tones of resentment.

"Oh, he is. Ask the Ashleys. There was something up about a dog. It was when Charles Carnegie was stopping there. He completely lost all self-control, and rushed to his room for his sword. Bessy met him on the stairs; he was brandishing it, and looking like a madman. She says there was an awful scene. Arthur declares he never before saw so violent a temper."

"Charles must have been greatly provoked," remarked Susan.

"He provoked himself, I believe. However, Susy, it is your own affair. I'm sure I don't want to set you against him. Marriage is a lottery at the best: 'for richer for poorer, for better for worse.' You will soon have to say that, you know."

Susan Chase had not soon to say it. The time of the wedding drew on, and on the day previous to that fixed for it, Lieutenant Carnegie arrived at Stopton, having obtained his leave of absence. Mrs. Chase's house was at some distance from it, but it was a fine, frosty morning, and he set out to walk.

He had come nearly in view of the house when he met a funeral. It startled Mr. Carnegie considerably, for surely it had come from the very house he was bound to. There were only some half-dozen cottages besides, that the road led to, just there, and that style of funeral was not likely to come from a cottage. He vaulted over a gate by the roadside, and peeped at it through the hedge; a hearse and several carriages. When it had passed, he came forth again, leaned over the gate, and gazed after it. Some children drew near, slowly following the sight in awe, gazers like himself.

"Who is dead?" he inquired of them. "Who is it that is being taken to the churchyard?"

"Mrs. Chase, sir."

"Mrs. Chase!" he uttered, horror-stricken. "What did she die of?"

The children did not know. Only that "she had died because she was ill."

"Can you inform me what Mrs. Chase died of?" the young officer repeated, for a woman now came up. "Was it any accident?"

"No, sir, no accident. She has been ailing a long time, some years, and she got suddenly worse at the last, and died," was the woman's answer, who evidently did not know Mr. Carnegie. "It was so quick, that her sons did not get here in time to see her, nor the little miss that was at school."

He was terribly shocked, scarcely able to believe it.

"When did she die?"

"On Tuesday, sir. Four days ago."

"Are they not burying her very soon?"

"Well, sir, the funeral was first fixed for to-morrow—I know all about it, you see, because I have been in there, since, helping the servants. But to-morrow, Saturday, was to have been Miss Susan Chase's wedding-day, and I believe she couldn't bear the idea, poor thing! of the funeral's taking place on it—what was to have been so different. Then the next day was Sunday, and some of the family did not like that day, and one of the sons was obliged to be back at his college on Monday. So they settled it for to-day."

Stunned with the news, Mr. Carnegie turned back. There seemed an indelicacy in his going to the house at that moment, and he waited till the after part of the day, and went then. A servant showed him into a darkened room, and Susan came to him.

He thought she would have cried herself ill. Her emotion was pitiable. He clasped her in his arms, and she lay there and sobbed, almost hysterically, as a child cries. She could give him very little more information than had previously been imparted. Their dear mother's complaint had taken an unfavourable turn, and had carried her off, almost without warning. One of her brothers, Susan said, had written to him on the Tuesday night, after it happened. Mr. Carnegie had left Ireland before the letter got there.

"Susan," he whispered, when she was a little calmer, "must this entail a separation on us?"

She looked at him, scarcely understanding.

"Must we wait? Must I sail without you?"

"Charles, that is almost a cruel question," she said at length. "How could you ask it? Would you have me marry you before my mother is cold in her grave? A year, at any rate, must pass over."

"It may be much longer than that. I shall not get leave so readily again. Oh, Susan! this is a hard trial."

"It is the will of God," she sighed, "and we must bear it."

"I shall not bear it patiently. I shall get marrying one of the copper, half-caste natives, out of defiance, or something as desperate. Fancy what it will be—condemned to vegetate by myself in that stifling climate, and you some millions of miles away!"

Susan was silent, pained at the tone of the remark. At that moment a girl of fifteen opened the door and looked in; wearing deep mourning, like herself.

"Come in, Emma, darling," she fondly said, drawing her sister towards her. "This is Mr. Carnegie, who was to have been so nearly related to us to-morrow. Charles," she added, "were there no other reason, I must have stayed to protect this child. My mother specially bequeathed her to me."

Emma Chase, who bore a resemblance to her sister Susan, felt a restraint in this stranger's presence, and she quickly and silently withdrew.

"Well, this is a gloomy prospect for us, Susan," resumed Mr. Carnegie, who could not get over his disappointment. "What I say is no mere joke—that it may be years before I can come to fetch you."

She raised her eyes to his, in all the expression of their trusting confidence. "No matter how many, Charles, you will find me waiting for you."

"But it is hard, for all that."

"Do you think—pray forgive me if I suggest anything wrong, or displeasing—that if you were to return at once to your duty, without taking the leave granted you now (excepting the time occupied in travelling, which cannot be avoided), that they would be more inclined to allow it you when you next ask for it? It is an idea that has occurred to me."

"Perhaps so. It is not a bad notion. But, Susan, I would rather spend it with you."

"We are so sad just now," she murmured; "all the house is sad."

There was something in her tone which seemed to convey an intimation that his presence might not be acceptable to that house of sorrow; or at least Mr. Carnegie fancied so. And he did think her suggestion of going back to his duty a good one.

"Then, Susan, I think I had better make up my mind to leave you, and start back this very night."

"It may be better," she answered, the tears standing in her eyes.

"And in another year, my darling, if all's well, I trust I shall come and claim you."

"I trust so," she whispered.

He had in his pocket her wedding-ring, which he had bought as he came through Liverpool, and he drew it forth, and slipped it on to her finger—on the finger he ought to have slipped it on, in church, on the morrow. "There, Susan; now that binds you to me. Let it remain there till—until I take it off only to put it on again."

"Not on that finger," she remonstrated, her pale cheek flushing.

"Why not?"

"Strangers will think that I am married."

"And in one sense you are so, for we are married in heart. Let it remain there for my sake."

"Very well," she murmured.

"Susan, I must now ask something else. The miniature that was taken of you."

Susan hesitated. It was still in her mother's room, in what she used to call her "treasure drawer."

"I was to have had the original, and they the likeness," he said; "but now that the original will be left at home, I may surely take the miniature. Let me have it, Susan."

She went and fetched it.

"And now I will bid you farewell, for if I am to go, I must start at once," he said, straining her to him. "God bless you, my love! my darling wife that was to have been! Be true to me, Susan, as I will be true to you."

He departed. But he did not return to his duty, as they had agreed. He meant to do so, but he returned by way of London, and the attractions of the capital proved too much for his resolution. In due course, he departed with his regiment for Barbadoes: and poor Susan Chase remained at home, to pine after him, and to wear the plain gold ring he had placed on her finger.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TWENTY-NINTH OF MAY.

FOR three years they did not meet. Nay, it was more; for it was winter when he went, and early summer when he returned. Whether Mr. Carnegie had grown less anxious for his marriage, or that he really could not obtain leave, certain it is, that for three years and four months Susan did not see him. In his letters, he had pressed much that she should go out and marry him there, but her innate sense of delicacy spoke against it. This prolonged absence had told much on her spirits, somewhat on her health. Her marriage preparations had long been made.

May came in, and had nearly gone again. On the 29th of that month, Susan was seated before the breakfast-table, waiting for her sisters, Ursula and Emma. They were still in the same house: it belonged to their eldest brother, and he was unmarried and frequently away from it. The young ladies had their own small fortune, about one hundred pounds a year each.

The 29th of May was kept as a gala day in their village, and in all that part of the country. Service was read in the church, and a

procession walked to it, with banners, and gilded oak balls and branches. It is done away with now, for we are writing of many years ago.

"Is it not a lovely day for the holiday people?" exclaimed Ursula, as she entered, and took her seat opposite Susan. "You will have delightful weather for your journey."

Susan was going out on the day but one following, a short journey of forty miles. Their cousin Lucy was about to be married. Her mother was an invalid, confined to her chamber, and Susan was wanted to superintend everything.

Emma came dancing in, with her merry blue eyes, and her shining curls. She was of a careless, gay temperament, unlike her thoughtful sisters. "Susy, you look sad," was her salutation, "and every soul has some peculiar source of gratification to-day. Did you hear the laughing crowds going by, all the morning, to gather the oak balls?"

"What may be your peculiar source of gratification, Emma?" asked Ursula.

"The putting on my new blue dress. You don't know how well it becomes me. I shall win more hearts at church to-day than the parson."

"You are a vain girl, Emma."

"I think I am," was her laughing answer; "but where's the harm of it? Seriously speaking, Susan, were I you, if that lieutenant of mine did not advertise himself shortly, I should give him up. He is the origin of all your sad looks. I don't think he troubles himself to write often; it is four months since his last letter arrived."

"He may be on his way home," said Susan. "In that letter he stated that he was going to apply for leave."

"Then he might have written to say so, if he is coming. Unless—Susan, I should not wonder—unless he means to take you by surprise!"

Susan aroused herself from a painful reverie. "Yes," she said, "I think he must be on his way to us; I have thought so several times lately." And a happy flush mantled to her cheeks, and she unconsciously twirled the plain gold ring round and round her finger. It was a habit she had fallen into, when her mind was absent.

The day passed on to evening. Some young ladies had come in to spend it with them. Soon after the shutters were closed, and lights brought in, a sound, as of a post-chaise, was heard approaching the house. None seemed to take any heed of it; they were not thinking of Mr. Carnegie; Susan's heart alone beat wildly. *Had he come?*

The door opened, and a tall, gentlemanly man entered. All in the room rose, and he stood in indecision, looking from one to the other. So many young ladies! "It is Charles Carnegie!" cried Frances Maitland.

"My darling Susan!" he whispered, advancing to one of them,

and clasping her tenderly to him. "How thankful I am that we have met again!" But she blushed and smiled, and drew away from him. *It was Emma he had gone up to.*

Frances Maitland advanced. "You have made a mistake Charles.—Ah! I see you have not forgotten me, but never mind me, just now.—This is not Susan."

"Not Susan!" he uttered.

"Susan, why don't you come forward?" For poor Susan Chase had retreated back into the shade. All her heart's life seemed to die within her, when that embrace was given to another. "Susan, I say!"

Miss Maitland was positive in manner, dragged forth Susan, and brought her up to Mr. Carnegie. He took her hand with cold indecision; looked at her, and then looked at Emma.

"You are playing with me," he said. "That is Susan."

"No, indeed, I am Emma," returned that young lady, laughing, and shaking back her sunny ringlets. "But they all say I am exactly like what Susan used to be."

Mr. Carnegie recollected himself. "Susan," he whispered, scanning her features, "I think I begin to recognise you. But you are much altered. I beg your pardon for the mistake I made."

"I am Susan," she answered, raising her tearful eyes.

"Have you been ill?" he inquired. "You are pale and thin."

"No: I have been well. I believe I am thinner than when you went away."

"That comes of fretting," interposed Miss Maitland—"sighing and fretting after you, Charles Carnegie." And Susan blushed deeply, making her look a little more like her old self.

"How was it you never wrote to say you were coming?"

"I did write, just before I sailed, stating when I should leave."

"Then we never received the letter. We thought you still in Barbadoes."

Many times in the evening did Mr. Carnegie's eyes rove towards the blooming Emma. Scarcely could he persuade himself that she was not Susan. The miniature he had taken with him had been a handsome likeness of Susan; as Emma was now a handsome likeness of what Susan had been. The hair was of the same colour, dark auburn, dressed in the same style; and to make the illusion more complete, the dress, in the painting, was light blue. There sat Emma, in her new and handsome light-blue silk dress, her blushing cheeks, her flowing ringlets, and her ready smile; and there sat Susan, pale and subdued, her features less rounded than formerly, her hair now worn plain, and her dress, handsome certainly, but a sober brown. She had not cared to adorn herself in the absence of Mr. Carnegie.

The visitors departed, and he and Susan talked over preliminaries that night. Mr. Carnegie had business to do in town; "lots of



things;" some his own, some that he had undertaken for his brother officers; he might get it done in three weeks, four at the most: and he proposed that they should be married at once, and go to London together. But to marry so soon, with only a day or two's notice, would be inconvenient, almost unheard of, Susan said. Therefore the wedding was fixed for a month hence, when he should have completed his business, and they would then spend two or three months at a quiet watering-place.

The following morning they breakfasted later than usual, for when Mr. Carnegie, who had promised to breakfast with them, came, he drew Susan out with him into the garden, and began talking to her lovingly, as of old. So late did they sit down to breakfast, that the post came in before they had finished. Only one letter, and that for Susan. She opened it.

"It is from my aunt," she said, "urging me to be sure not to disappoint them, and to bring with me the pattern of a pretty spencer, if I happen to have one."

"How like my aunt that is!" laughed Ursula. "She is always on the look-out for patterns. I believe she must collect them or sell them. You will write to-day, Susan, and explain why you cannot go."

"But—I am thinking," hesitated Susan—"that I can go. Aunt, poor thing, is so helpless, and they have so depended on me. I believe I shall be able to go."

"If you could do so, it would be a charity," said Ursula; "for what my aunt will do without you, I cannot conceive. When do you leave for town, Mr. Carnegie?"

"As soon as I can," he answered; "some of my business is in a hurry. Not to-day, for I must give a look in at the Maitlands and other friends: and I have much to talk over yet with Susan. To-morrow I shall leave."

"And it is to-morrow morning that I ought to start," remarked Susan. "I do not see why I should not go. Ursula can superintend things here in my absence, and I shall be back again at the end of a fortnight."

"Mind that you are home in time, Susan," said Mr. Carnegie, with mock gravity.

"I will be sure to be back in time," she laughed. "But I think I ought to go."

She did go. And had to be at Stopton early the following morning to take the stage-coach. Some of the family went with her, and Mr. Carnegie. "You will have to start in half an hour after me," Susan remarked to him; "only you travel by a different route."

"I am not going to town to-day," he answered, "but to-morrow. I had no time to give to the Maitlands yesterday, and they expect me to spend to-day with them."

"Then I think I must say, Mind you are back in time," returned

Susan, jokingly. He took a fond farewell of her, and she departed on her journey.

Precisely to the day, at the end of the fortnight, Susan was at home again, arriving in the afternoon. One of the first persons she saw, as she entered the house, was Mr. Carnegie.

"Charles! You here!" she uttered, in astonishment. "Have you come down from London?"

"I have not been to London," was Mr. Carnegie's answer; "one thing or another has detained me here. The Maitlands teased me to stay, and I too readily yielded; then I began to reflect how much pleasanter it would be to have you in London with me. So I shall just make myself at ease till the happy day, and we will go there together."

There was something in these words displeasing to the ear of Susan. Stay; it was the tone in which they were spoken. It was pressingly eager: as if he were so anxious to justify himself. And never to have written to her!

"You might have sent me a letter, Charles, all this while."

"In the first week, I did not care that you should know I had not left, for I was perpetually vowing to be off the next hour. And since then, I have been expecting you every day: Ursula thought you might come home before the fortnight was up."

"You might have mentioned, when you wrote to me, that Charles was here," said Susan, looking at her sister Ursula.

"Mr. Carnegie requested me not to do so."

"To surprise you, Susan," interrupted Mr. Carnegie.

Ursula had spoken gravely; he, eagerly; and Susan wondered. She retired to her own room, to remove her things, and in a few minutes Frances Maitland called, and went up to her.

"What a shame of you, Susy, to leave Charles Carnegie to his own disconsolate self!" was her unceremonious salutation. "And the instant he arrived here, after his three years' absence!"

"Nay," said Susan, "he first of all decided to leave me, and go up to town. When I left, I thought he was going also. I think I ought to reproach you, Frances, for having kept him. He says that the Maitlands teased him to remain, and he too readily yielded."

"He did not say so!"

"Yes, he did. He has just said so to me."

"Well, that's cool!" returned Frances Maitland. "I shall tell Mr. Charlie of that. If he has been three times in our house, since you left, it is as much as he has youtsafed us of his society."

"Nonsense!" retorted Susan.

"It is quite true. I'll ask Charlie how much they charge to teach story-telling in Barbadoes."

"Do I understand that you have not seen Charles more than three times since I left home?" returned Miss Chase.

"There you go again, Susan; catching at words, and stumbling to

conclusions! I said he had not been more than three times inside our house. I have seen him dozens of times; for he has been perpetually about the grounds and in the park, with Emma. We have come upon them at all hours. Do you not think Emma looks funny?"

"I have not yet seen Emma," answered Susan. "What do you mean by funny?"

"She has become so shy and distant. If we only speak to her, she rushes away. I think Charles Carnegie has scared her out of her self-possession."

"You always were fanciful, Frances."

"And perhaps always shall be. You would have been better at home than away; at any rate, that's no fancy. I have come to ask you to spend this evening with us; and that's no fancy. You, your sisters, and Charles Carnegie."

"I am rather tired," answered Susan, "but I will come if the rest do."

"It is decided then, for I asked Ursula as I came in. Some of you can invite Charlie; I may not meet with him. Good-bye, until evening."

When Susan went down to the sitting-room, Ursula and Emma were there. "Let me look at you," she said to the latter, after kissing her fondly. "I want to have a good look at your face. Frances Maitland says you have become queer and shy, and that Charles has scared you out of your self-possession."

Susan had Emma before her, as she spoke, and she was astonished at the violent rush of crimson which her words called up. Face, neck, ears, were dyed with it. Not only this: Emma began to tremble, and then burst into tears, and ran from the room.

Susan could not speak from astonishment. She turned towards Ursula, and saw her looking on with a severe expression.

"What can have come to Emma?" faltered Susan. "I meant it only as a joke. Ursula, you look strange, too. The house altogether seems unlike itself. What can be the matter?"

Ursula did not answer. The scowl on her brow was very deep.

"Ursula, I ask you, what is it? You seem angry with me."

Ursula rose; she was tall and stout, and she threw her large arms round Susan, and whispered:

"Not with you, Susan dear. Oh no, not with you. My poor Susan!"

Susan began to tremble, almost as Emma had done. "There is some mystery," she breathed.

"Yes, something has occurred. I shrink from the task of telling you."

"Must you tell me? must I know it? I have been so full of peace and happiness of late."

"You must know it, I believe. I scarcely knew whether to tell you or not, and I took counsel of Frances Maitland, when she came

in just now, and she says I must do so. She was going to tell you herself, but I forbade her."

Susan sat down, somewhat reassured. She thought it might be only that something had gone wrong in the household: or perhaps the dressmaker had ruined the wedding-dresses. "Tell me at once, Ursula. Do not beat about the bush."

"You say I looked angry," said Ursula. "I am angry; with Emma. She has grown to love Charles Carnagie."

Susan turned white. She could not speak.

"Listen a moment, and you shall know as much as I do. After you left, Charles stayed on, sleeping at the inn, as before. I wondered, but of course it was not my business to send him away. He was much here; it was only natural that he should be. Then I noticed—it seemed to occur to my mind all in a moment—how much Emma was with him; out with him in the grounds at all times and all hours, and with him indoors. Well, Susan, I never attempted to check it, for it only seemed natural. Last night Frances Maitland ran in, at dusk, after their tea. I don't know what it was with you, but here it was a dull, dismal evening, almost foggy. 'When do you expect Susan home?' were her first words, without saying How d'ye do, or anything—but you know her abrupt manner. 'Probably to-morrow,' I answered. 'Well, it's time she came, that's all,' said she. 'I have seen what I don't like. I have suspected it some days, but I am sure of it now—that Emma is too intimate with Charles Carnagie.' Susan," added Ursula, "you might have knocked me down with a feather; and then it all rose up frightfully before me, their walking out together, and their whisperings indoors."

"How did she mean that they were too intimate?" faltered Susan. "What had she seen?"

"She would not say. She said she should only tell you. You had better ask her."

Susan leaned her head upon her hand. "Frances is very fanciful," was her remark, "and if once she takes an idea into her head, her imagination improves upon it."

"True. You must have it out with her, what she did see, and what she did not see. When Emma walked herself in, last night, it was almost dark; I said nothing to her. I fear she is too fond of him: it all looks like it. Of his sentiments I know nothing; but, since this occurred, I have wondered whether she was the attraction that kept him here."

How Susan bore with her anxiety until evening, when they went to the Maitlands, she scarcely knew. She drew Frances aside at once. "Ursula has told me," she whispered. "What was it you saw?"

"Only that she was clasped to Charles Carnagie's breast, crying and wailing, and he was kissing her."

"Oh, Frances! you surely never saw that!"

"I saw it. If it were the last word I ever spoke, I saw it," im-

pressively uttered Miss Maitland. "They were bemoaning their hard fate in his being bound to you. She sobbed out that her happiness was gone for ever, and he that he had never loved Susan half as passionately as he loved her. That is all I saw or heard, Susan; but that is pretty well."

"Where were they?"

"In the grove, by the large elm-tree at the turning. You know the bench."

Susan went into the drawing-room. The scene swam before her eyes; she answered questions at random; and when Mr. Carnegie spoke to her, she turned faint and sick. Outwardly he was attentive to her, but it was a forced attention. In the course of the evening, when some of the party were in the garden, Mr. Carnegie drew Emma away from the rest. Susan followed them: she believed it her duty: she was wretched, jealous, miserable. She saw them standing together in an attitude of the deepest affection, and she drew away again, more jealous and more wretched than before.

"What shall you do?—what will be your course?" Miss Maitland asked her.

"I know not—I know not," she answered, in tones of anguish. "Frances, pity me!—oh, that I could fly away somewhere, from it all, and find rest!"

Frances Maitland did pity her, little as she was given to pitying any one. "It will take Susan years to get over this," was her mental comment. "I wonder whether she will marry him."

When they left that night, Mr. Carnegie offered his arm to Susan. She thanked him, and said she had her dress to hold up. Yet short skirts were worn then. He went at once to Emma; she took it, and they lingered, whispering, behind Susan and Ursula. He left them at their door, and Susan shut herself into her chamber to think.

An hour afterwards, she entered Emma's room, who was then undressing. She said what she had to say; despair was in her low voice; no anger; yet Emma flung herself down on the floor, and screamed and sobbed in self-reproach.

"I could not help it—I could not help it," she shrieked forth. "That first moment, when he suddenly appeared, and clasped me in his embrace, drew my heart to him: and my love for him is as living fire. Why was I so like you? Why are you so changed? Half his time he calls me Susan: his love has not altered, he says, only that I am now what you were. To love you, as you are now, he must change the object of his mind's affection—and he cannot do it."

"Next to him, who was my second self, I have loved you," moaned Susan, as she sat on a low chair, and rocked herself to and fro. "I have cherished you as something more precious than self; I promised our mother to do so, on her death-bed: and this is my reward!"

It was a strange scene. Emma sobbing, and writhing on the carpet in her white dressing-gown. "I would not have brought this misery to us all purposely," she said, "and we never meant you to know it: I cannot think how it is you do know it. When once you and he have sailed, I shall sit down and hug my unhappiness, and I hope it will kill me, Susan; then you will be avenged."

"I would have sacrificed my life for you," whispered Susan; "I must now sacrifice what is far dearer. You must be the one to sail with him; not I."

"Susan! you never shall sacrifice yourself for me! I——"

"No more," interrupted Susan. "My resolution is taken, and I came to tell it you. I hope that time will be merciful to me: to us both."

Susan left the room as she spoke, and there stood Ursula.

"Susan, I heard you, in there; I almost hoped you were beating her. We must send her away to my aunt's to-morrow morning, until the wedding is over."

"Oh, Ursula," she wailed, in a tone of the deepest anguish, "can you not see what must be? The wedding must be hers, not mine: she must marry Mr. Carnegie."

"Give in to those two false ones!" uttered Ursula. "You never shall with my consent."

"For my own sake as much as hers," murmured Susan. "To marry him, when his love has openly left me, might be to enter on a life of reproach from him, certainly of coldness, possibly of neglect and cruelty. Ursula, that is more than I could bear. I will have one more interview with him, and then leave till they are gone. You must superintend what is required by Emma."

"What will the neighbours say?" wondered Ursula. And Susan shivered.

She held her interview with Mr. Carnegie the next morning, but what took place at it was never spoken of by either. Susan's face bore traces of many tears when she came out, and he looked more troubled and annoyed than he had ever looked before; holding the unfortunate gold ring between his fingers, in a dubious way, as if he did not know what to do with it. The chaise was at the door to convey her to Stopton, on her way to her aunt's, when, as she was stepping into it, Frances Maitland came racing down.

"What is all this rumour, Susan?" she demanded. "That you are going away, and that Emma is to marry Mr. Carnegie. I will not have such folly. I have come to stop it. The country will cry shame upon her and upon him. Lock her up, and keep her upon bread and water. You have sacrificed enough for her, I think, without sacrificing your husband."

"Say no more, Frances," was her only answer. "I cannot bear it."



She waved her adieu, and drove away with a breaking heart. Never to return home until long after Mr. Carnagie and Emma, his wife, had sailed for Barbadoes.

"No luck will attend them," was the comment of Frances Maitland.

*(To be continued.)*

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## THE BIRTH OF ROSES.

### AN OLD LEGEND.

THERE she stood—a holy maiden, in the land of corn and wine,  
In the lowly Bethlehem village terraced o'er with drooping vine :  
Fig and olive spread their shadow, and the far-off cool sea breeze  
Shook the sun's too ardent kisses from the fair pomegranate trees.  
On the rounded hills and mountains, grateful for the dew and

rain,  
Grew the thyme for wild bees' honey—and the cattle grazed the  
plain,  
While within the fruitful valleys lay the harvest's golden grain.

Stood this holy Christian maiden, 'mid a sea of faces stern—  
Blamed for wrong and wholly slander'd, doomed on faggot pyre  
to burn.

Close behind the ruthless people, crouched the tender mother low,  
Wond'ring at a faith so mighty that could change a maiden so !  
Change her timid fawn-eyed daughter to this maiden without fear,  
Mould her gentle dew-eyed darling to this maid without a tear ;  
Murm'ring only, "I am guiltless! Blessed Saviour Jesus, hear!"

"Fire the faggots! burn the sinner!" shout the angered people  
wild,  
Still the calm sweet voice is pleading, "Saviour Jesus! save your  
child!"

In a moment, ere the hot breath of the fire touch'd her feet,  
There up-rose a wondrous incense, than all flowers more passing  
sweet!

For each faggot that was scorching grew a rose branch—rosy red,  
And each brand that 'scaped the burning, snowy blossoms bore  
instead.

It is thus the Birth of Roses happened years ago, 'tis said.

FANNY ROCHAT.

## THE STRANGE STORY OF OUR VILLA.

BY M. E. PENN.

“‘VILLA de l'Orient, Avenue des Citronniers, Nice’—really, our address looks uncommonly well at the head of a letter,” remarked Mrs. Brandon, contemplating, with her head on one side, the effect of the words she had just written.

“It really does,” we agreed in chorus. We always agreed with Mrs. Brandon; it saved trouble.

We were three “lone-lorn” females—two spinsters and a widow—who had agreed to share a house—or, rather, part of a house, for we occupied but one story—at Nice for the winter.

First there was Mrs. Brandon—our chaperon, housekeeper, and directress in chief—tall, blonde, majestic, with a calm, suave manner, and a quietly distinct voice, which always made itself heard and obeyed; then came Miss Lucy Lester, a plump, good-tempered little lady of a certain age, with a round, smiling face, kindly blue eyes, and not an angle about her, either moral or physical. Lastly there was the present writer, who modestly prefers to leave her portrait to the reader’s imagination, trusting that he will paint it in the most attractive colours at his disposal.

The supplementary members of the party were Mrs. Brandon’s daughter Georgie, an over-grown school-girl of thirteen; Georgie’s inseparable companion, “Chum,” a small, sharp, and extremely impudent fox-terrier; and Joséphine, our stout French *bonne*, who inhabited a microscopic kitchen, which her capacious person entirely filled.

In spite of its name there was nothing in the least Oriental about the appearance of “our villa.” It was simply a good-sized, square, pink-and-white house, looking, Georgie said, as if it were built of *nougat*, with green balconies and shutters, and a semi-circular flight of steps to the front door. It stood in the midst of an extensive garden, planted with orange and lemon trees, and sheltered on one side by a rocky hill, which rose above it, sheer and straight, like a natural wall. At the end of the garden was a rustic bench, sheltered by a gnarled old olive-tree.

The house was furnished with remarkable taste. The house-agent, through whom we took our *appartement*, informed us that the landlord, M. de Valeyre—a gentleman of good birth, though not of large means, who was now on a shooting tour in Corsica—had spent many years of his life in the East, and our rooms contained not a few souvenirs of his travels in the shape of ornaments, rugs, and

draperies, to say nothing of his own clever oil-sketches of Oriental life and scenery which adorned the walls.

The rooms, though decidedly small, were bright and airy, and the outlook on the garden, where the oranges were ripening under their glossy leaves, delightful. Altogether we felt we might congratulate ourselves on our good fortune.

"Yes," proceeded our "chief," glancing complacently around her—we were sitting in the dining-room after lunch on the third day of our arrival—"it is really a *trouvaille*. So charmingly situated, so well furnished, and so cheap! We might have looked all over Nice and found nothing to suit us so well."

"We might, indeed," assented Lucy Lester, who generally echoed the last speaker. "One could wish, perhaps, that the bedrooms were a little larger——"

"And that they did not open one out of the other like a nest of boxes, of which mine is the inside box," I ventured to add.

Mrs. Brandon glanced at me austere over her eyeglass.

"If we, whom you disturb by passing through our rooms, do not object to that, I think *you* need not," she observed reprovingly.

"But it seems you do object," I returned. "Every morning I am greeted with anathemas 'not loud, but deep,' half smothered under the bed-clothes."

"Why will you persist in getting up at such unearthly hours, waking people out of their beauty sleep?"

"I don't mind that," put in Georgie, who was teaching Chum to balance a pencil on his nose; "but I do wish the woman upstairs would not make such a noise at night; I can't go to sleep for her. The ceilings are so thin, one hears every sound."

"The woman upstairs?" her mother repeated. "What do you mean, child? There is no one in the house but ourselves. The upper stories and the ground floor are unlet."

"There is some one in the room above mine all the same," Georgie persisted. "She keeps me awake by walking about overhead, sometimes muttering and laughing to herself, and sometimes sobbing as if her heart would break. Last night I stood up on the bed and rapped the ceiling with my umbrella to silence her, but she kept on all the same. Chum heard her too—didn't you, sir?"

Chum, glad of any interruption to his lesson, barked an emphatic assent.

"Well, now, that is very strange," Miss Lester remarked, dropping her knitting. "I have fancied, myself, do you know, that I heard some one moving about, overhead; not only at night, but in the daytime."

"Perhaps there is some servant or caretaker left in charge of the rooms," Mrs. Brandon said after a pause; "I will ask M. Gillet when next I see him."

We saw M. Gillet, the house-agent, the following day. He called,

as he explained politely, to ask after the health of "these ladies," and to ascertain if we were satisfied with our "installation."

He was a round, fat, oily man of middle age, with a bland manner and a propitiatory smile.

"We are quite well and perfectly satisfied," Mrs. Brandon replied graciously, answering for us all, as usual. "But I thought you told us, M. Gillet, that the upstairs rooms were unoccupied?"

"So they are, madame. There is no one in the house but yourselves and your servant."

"Then who is it my daughter hears at night in the room above hers?" He raised his eyebrows, glancing inquiringly at Georgie.

"I hear a woman walking about and talking to herself," she explained. "I can't understand what she says; it is not French."

"Ah!" His face changed from smiling incredulity to startled gravity. He drew in his lips and looked perturbed.

"It must be Madame de Valeyre," he muttered; "it can be no one else. Just like her to turn up again in this mysterious fashion without a word of warning! Monsieur will be furious when he knows she is here, and I shall certainly think it my duty to inform him at once."

"Are you speaking of our landlord's wife?" I inquired. He assented.

"But why should he be displeased? Has she not a right to occupy her own house?"

"Well—no—that is just it. When they separated by mutual consent a year ago it was expressly stipulated, as a condition of his making her an allowance, that she should not return here, or in any way molest him. I had it from his own lips."

"Why did they separate?" Miss Lester inquired, curiously.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"'Incompatibility of temper' was the reason given, but, of course, there were others. The fact is, it was one of those madly romantic marriages which never do turn out well—except in novels. She was an Arab girl whom he picked up somewhere in Algeria, and insisted on marrying, to the scandal of his family and friends—that is her portrait," he added, nodding towards a picture on the wall; "painted by Monsieur himself, soon after his marriage."

We looked with interest at the canvas; a slight but clever oil-sketch of a young Arab girl, with an oval olive-tinted face of striking beauty, and strange passionate dark eyes with a smouldering fire in their depths. Under it was written "Ayesha," and a date.

"Yes, she was handsome, then," he admitted, in answer to our comments, "but half a savage, and more than half a heathen, though supposed to have been converted. I heard that in the early days of their marriage she spent most of her time concocting charms and potions 'to keep her husband's love.' Apparently they were not the right sort," he added drily; "he soon wearied of her; then there were

scenes, tears, upbraidings. Madame was jealous—(with cause, if report spoke truly); Monsieur had a temper—*enfin*, no one was surprised when, just a year ago, M. de Valeyre announced that they had separated by mutual consent, and that Madame had returned to her friends. Since then he has been travelling, and no doubt is much happier without her."

"While she, poor soul, is fretting her heart out," Mrs. Brandon put in; "though I have no doubt he was a brute to her."

The agent shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating smile.

"There were faults on both sides, Madame; but it was hardly possible for any man to live in peace with such a *toquée* as she is."

"*Toquée?*" Mrs. Brandon repeated; "do you mean that she is mad? If so, it is certainly not pleasant to have her in the house."

"*Mais non, Madame!*" he protested; "she is not mad; only eccentric, erratic, capricious. Her returning in this mysterious way is a proof of it. Of course I have no right to interfere with her, but I shall certainly let M. de Valeyre know at once that she is here. You must not be subjected to this annoyance."

After a few more words he took his leave.

The days that followed were fully and pleasantly occupied in exploring Nice and its environs, which were new to all of us. We sunned ourselves on the Promenade des Anglais; drove on the Cornice Road; heard the band in the Jardin Public, and loitered among the tempting shops on the Place Masséna; all in due course. The weather was glorious. Sunny days and moonlit nights succeeded each other in uninterrupted splendour, and made it difficult for us to believe that we were actually within a few weeks of Christmas.

The presence of the mysterious Madame de Valeyre in the house was no longer a matter of doubt. Not only had we all heard her restless footsteps overhead, and the unintelligible muttering which sounded so strangely uncanny, but more than once we had caught sight of her—a tall slender figure clad in a loose white wrapper—pacing to and fro in the shadowy garden alleys, or sitting on the bench under the gnarled old olive-tree. Once, at dusk, I met her on the stair-case flitting silently upstairs to her own lonely rooms, but she passed me quickly without returning my salutation, or even glancing at me.

"*C'est drôle!*" Joséphine often remarked; "to shut herself up like that, without even a servant. And how does she get her food? she never seems to go beyond the gates."

We agreed that it *was* "drôle," but did not trouble ourselves greatly about the matter, having more interesting occupation for our thoughts.

One evening, in the third week of our tenancy, the others were gone to the theatre, and I, pleading letters to write, had remained at home with no companion but "Chum," having given Joséphine permission to go out.

Chum, by the way, was the only one of the party who did not appear to like his winter quarters. He had not been in his usual rude health and spirits since we came to the Villa, but seemed restless and depressed. Even now, as he lay curled up on my gown, he could not sleep quietly, but kept waking up with a start and a shiver, looking uneasily about him.

I sat in the dining-room, out of which the other rooms opened. To the right was the curtained doorway (doors there were none) of the *salon*—to the left, that which admitted to Mrs. Brandon's bed-room, leading out of which was Miss Lester's. The dressing-room of the latter had been converted into a bed-room for Georgie, and the last of the suite was my own chamber.

The evening was warm and very still. Glancing through the open window, which was shaded by a tall eucalyptus, I caught a glimpse of a sky full of stars, and over the tree-tops a line of tremulous silver showed where the sea lay sleeping.

As I lowered my head to my writing again, my eye was arrested by a slight movement of the *portière* which screened the drawing-room doorway. I looked up quickly, but seeing nothing unusual, concluded I had been mistaken. I was writing busily again, when the dog stirred uneasily, growled, then suddenly sprang to his feet, gazing, with dilated eyes and ears erect, towards the door. As I involuntarily looked again in the same direction, I was startled to see a hand, the long slender hand of a woman, put forth from within to draw the curtain back. For a moment it remained motionless, grasping the *portière*, and I had time to note every detail of its form and colour; the fine but dusky skin, the delicate taper fingers, on one of which gleamed a quaint snake-shaped gold ring. Then the curtain was abruptly withdrawn, and a figure appeared in the opening: a tall, slender woman, enveloped in a loose wrapper of some gauzy Algerian stuff.

It was Madame de Valeyre. I had never had a full view of her face before, but I recognised her at once as the original of the portrait: thinner, older, with a wild and troubled look in her lovely dark eyes, but the same.

Too startled to speak, I stared at her, and she looked back as silently and as fixedly at me. Then, before I could rise or address her, my strange visitor crossed the room with a calm and leisurely step, and passed through the opposite doorway.

Recovering from my surprise, I caught up the lamp and followed her. She had already traversed Mrs. Brandon's bedroom, and was passing into the one beyond.

"Pardon, Madame——" I called after her; but she neither paused nor turned till she reached the threshold of my own room, the inner one of the suite.

Drawing back the *portière* with one hand, she looked at me over her shoulder—a look that thrilled me, so earnest it was, so imperious, so fraught with meaning to which I had not the clue—but uttered



not a word. Then she passed in, and the heavy curtain dropped behind her.

In a second's space I had followed her into the room.

To my utter astonishment she was not there. I looked round blankly, raising the lamp above my head. There was no other door but that by which she had entered; no closet, no cupboard, no recess in which she could be concealed. And yet she was gone, vanished, it seemed, into thin air. For a moment I stood, looking about me in utter bewilderment; then a sort of panic seized me—an irrational fear of I knew not what or whom.

I hurried back through the empty and silent rooms, not daring to cast a glance behind me; and feeling a sudden distaste for the dining-room, took refuge in the tiny kitchen, where I sat with Chum on my lap, starting nervously at every sound, till the others returned.

I had decided to say nothing of what had occurred to Miss Lester or Georgie, lest it should alarm them, but Mrs. Brandon I must tell, for the relief of my own mind, though I hardly expected she would believe my story. In fact it seemed, even to myself, so incredible that I could well excuse her scepticism.

It was as I anticipated. She heard me out with a look of mingled astonishment and incredulity.

"My dear Edith," she said when I had finished; "excuse me, but—are you quite sure you did not fall asleep and dream all this?"

"I am quite sure that I was as wide awake then as I am now."

"But it is so utterly unaccountable," she objected; "not only her disappearance, but her appearance. How did she get into the drawing-room in the first instance? She was not there when we went out I am certain, and she could not have entered it afterwards without your seeing her. Why did you not ask her what she wanted—what she meant by it?"

"I was too startled at first, and when I recovered myself she had vanished."

"Well, I hope I shall encounter her myself," Mrs. Brandon remarked resolutely; "she shall not 'vanish' again till she has explained the matter, I promise you. We can't have her prowling about our rooms like a Banshee."

But the days passed on, and we caught no further glimpse of Madame de Valeyre.

\* \* \* \*

It was the last day of the old year—a day so brilliant, so warm, serene, and sunny, that it would not have disgraced an English mid-summer. Long after Georgie had retired for the night, we three elders sat round the handful of wood fire which we kept in more for the sake of cheerfulness than warmth, talking of old times, old friends and old scenes, in that retrospective mood which falls on most of us at such seasons.

"I wonder if that poor woman upstairs will have any one to wish

her '*Bonne Année*' to-morrow?" Miss Lester remarked during a pause in the conversation. "Fancy how *triste* to be spending New Year's Eve alone! I thought I heard her crying just now."

We listened, and sure enough a sound of suppressed sobbing, inexpressibly sad and forlorn, reached us from the room above.

"Poor soul!" Mrs. Brandon exclaimed compassionately. "I feel strongly inclined to go upstairs and see if there is anything I can do to help or comfort her, but there is no knowing how she might take it. She is evidently more than a little *toquée*, as M. Gillet told us. If that husband of hers——"

She left the sentence unfinished, and we all started as a sound of wheels reached us, coming rapidly up the garden drive, and stopping at the door. The next moment there was a loud peal at the bell.

"Who can it be at this hour? it is past eleven o'clock!" I exclaimed.

"Perhaps it is Monsieur de Valeyre," Lucy Lester suggested suddenly. I rose, and, cautiously opening the window, glanced down into the garden. The moonlight showed me a tall man's figure just alighting from a *fiacre*, the driver of which was handing down a gun-case and a portmanteau.

"It is our landlord, sure enough," I said, closing the window. "Monsieur Gillet's information has brought him home, I suppose. I hope there will be no 'scene' upstairs."

"Dear me, I hope not!" Lucy echoed; though the anticipated excitement seemed not altogether displeasing to her.

"He is evidently not remarkable for patience," was Mrs. Brandon's comment, as another still louder peal rang though the house. "If Madame does not choose to admit him one of us must go down. Joséphine is in bed long ago."

I volunteered for the task, and, Lucy offering to accompany me, we descended, noisily escorted by Chum.

The *fiacre* was driving away as we opened the door, and the visitor stood on the step, looking out at the moonlit garden.

He turned, and, expecting no doubt to see a servant, was beginning an impatient exclamation at the delay, but checked himself on perceiving us.

"A hundred pardons, Mesdames, for disturbing you at this untimely hour," he said, raising his hat; "but I have only just arrived from Corsica. I am Monsieur de Valeyre," he added.

I bowed, and drew back to admit him, trying in vain to silence Chum, whose bark was now exchanged for a low, angry growl.

The visitor was a tall, well-built, bronze-complexioned man of six or seven and thirty, with a face which would have been strikingly handsome but for its worn and haggard look, and something repellent in the expression of the bold dark eyes.

"Your dog objects to strangers, apparently," he said, with a glance of no great favour at the terrier, who responded with a snarl which showed all his little sharp white teeth.

"He is a capital watch-dog," I said, apologetically; "he would soon let us know if there were thieves in the house."

"Ah, that reminds me——" He turned as he spoke, to put up the door-chain. "I hear from Gillet, my agent, that you were alarmed on your arrival by strange noises in the upper rooms. Do they still continue?"

"We were not alarmed exactly, but they puzzled us till we knew that Madame de Valeyre had returned."

He let fall the door-chain and turned to look at me.

"Madame de Valeyre?" he repeated.

"Yes; did not M. Gillet tell you, Monsieur, that she was here?"

"He told me you had said so, but I could not believe it; I cannot believe it now. She—my wife—is with her family at Algiers, and it is not likely she would have returned without letting me know."

"She is in the house at this moment," I said, quietly; "she has been here for the last month. We have not only heard but seen her repeatedly—have we not?" I added, turning to my companion, who echoed, "Repeatedly!"

He looked from one to the other of us with a frown, but said nothing; and, having secured the fastening of the door, took up his portmanteau and followed us upstairs.

"May I ask you to lend me your light for a moment?" he said, when we reached the landing; "I will return it presently."

Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed before he descended. We heard him going from room to room, opening and shutting doors and windows, but no sound of voices reached us.

At last he reappeared at the open door of our sitting-room, candle in hand. Mrs. Brandon herself went forward to take it from him, looking at him scrutinizingly as she did so.

"Many thanks, Madame," he said, relinquishing it to her with a bow. Then, turning to me, he added, coldly: "You were mistaken in supposing that my wife had returned. There is no living creature in the rooms upstairs, nor have they been entered since I left them."

"But we have seen her——" I began.

"Whoever you may have seen, it was certainly not my wife," was his reply.

Before I could speak again, he added:

"I have the honour to wish you good-evening, Mesdames," and, with a comprehensive bow which included us all, he left the room.

We looked at each other bewilderedly. What did it mean? What had become of the woman?

"She must have heard his voice, and hidden herself somewhere, in fear of him," Miss Lester suggested.

"Depend upon it, she has reason to fear him," Mrs. Brandon remarked. "He looks like a man who would use his power mercilessly. It is dreadful to think of that poor half-demented creature being left unprotected to his anger, perhaps violence."

Lucy Lester drew her shawl closer round her with a shiver.

"I feel as if something terrible was going to happen," she said nervously.

The same uneasy presentiment weighed on my own mind, together with some other shadowy fear which I could not have put into words.

Feeling too anxious and excited to go to bed, we gathered round the fire again, talking in whispers, and listening apprehensively to every sound from above. For a time we heard M. de Valeyre moving about; then there was silence, only interrupted when the time-piece, chiming midnight, reminded us to wish each other a Happy New Year.

After that I must have fallen into a doze, from which I was roused by a touch on my arm.

"Edith," Mrs. Brandon whispered, "do you hear?"

I started and sat upright, looking about me in the confusion of a sudden awakening. "What is it?" I asked.

Keeping her hand on my arm, she pointed upwards. The light restless footsteps we had grown to know so well, were once more pacing to and fro overhead, and we heard the low intermittent murmur of a woman's voice. Suddenly it was interrupted by a cry—a man's hoarse cry of mortal anguish or terror, such as I trust I may never hear again.

Mingling with the cry, came a peal of eldritch laughter, then the sound of a struggle, and a heavy fall which shook the house.

"Come, or there will be murder done," Mrs. Brandon exclaimed, and she hurried from the room and upstairs, followed by Miss Lester and myself.

We found the outer door of M. de Valeyre's apartments closed, but not locked, and passing through the ante-chamber, entered the first room of the suite. A lamp on the chimney-piece showed that it was in strange disorder; the furniture displaced, the carpet upturned, the cloth half-dragged from the table.

Its only present occupant was the master of the house, who crouched against the wall at the further end, in an attitude of abject terror.

Never while I live shall I forget the face he turned towards us when we entered. With strained dilated eyes, and parted lips, it looked like an image of incarnate Fear. I stopped short over the threshold, feeling a shrinking reluctance to enter, but Mrs. Brandon without hesitation advanced to his side.

"What is the matter? what has happened?" she asked.

He looked at her vaguely, but seemed incapable of uttering a word, and put his hand to his throat as if suffocating. There was a carafe of brandy on the table. She filled a liqueur glass and held it to his lips. Presently he drew a deep sobbing breath, and half raised himself, glancing round the room with a haggard look of dread.

"Is she—gone?" he asked hoarsely.

"There is no one here but ourselves," Mrs. Brandon replied. "You——" She broke off, recoiling from him with a stifled cry.

He had started convulsively, and was gazing with a look of speechless terror at some object on the opposite side of the room. Involuntarily we followed the direction of his eyes, but to us nothing was visible.

"There she is—look!" he gasped. "My wife—dead, yet living. Keep her from me—keep her hands from my throat! Ayesha—mercy—pardon! Oh, Heaven."

He crouched against the wall again, putting out both hands to repel some invisible assailant; struggling desperately as if with an actual bodily antagonist, and apparently using all his strength to keep the murderous fingers from his throat.

Mrs. Brandon had fled from him in a panic, and we all three stood on the threshold, watching with horror-struck eyes that ghastly struggle. It did not last long. With a dreadful choking cry he dropped his arms; his whole figure collapsed and fell in a heap, face downwards, on the floor.

Strangely enough my fear had now utterly passed away. While the others hesitated I approached him and lifted his head, and turned his face to the light. After one glance I laid it down again with a shudder. "Has he fainted again?" they asked me. "He is dead," I answered, as I rose.

Yes, he was dead; but *how* had he died? What was the meaning of those livid finger-marks, which, for a moment, I had seen plainly printed on his throat? That is a mystery which has never been solved.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sudden death of the master of the Villa de l'Orient caused a sensation in Nice, where he was well known, and it was intensified by a rumour that Madame de Valeyre had mysteriously disappeared. There was no trace of her recent presence in the house, and it was ascertained that her relatives in Algeria had had no news of her for more than a year. Some other facts came to light which threw a sinister suspicion on the dead man. Search was made in the garden and grounds, and finally her body was discovered buried under the old olive-tree. An Algerian scarf, tightly knotted round her throat, showed what had been the manner of her death.

It need hardly be said that we took flight as soon as possible from the ill-omened house, which was shortly afterwards demolished by order of the Valeyre family, so that not a vestige now remains of what we once called "our villa."

## MISJUDGED.

We thought her patient feet were strong  
 Life's bleakest heights to win :  
 (We never dreamed of secret wounds  
 Which throb and bleed within !)

We judged her heart too lofty for  
 Earth's petty pains to touch :  
 (We said apart that she was one  
 Who would not love too much !)

We told her all our woes and wrongs,  
 Because she found redress,  
 (But others had our gayer hours,  
 Our flattery and caress !)

And if we could not know her right,  
 We loved to think her wrong :  
 (Such feeble hands may throw the mire  
 Which stains the pure and strong !)

We whispered, "Need she work so hard?"  
 ('Twas love of gear, we said)  
 Yet somehow every face grew pale  
 To hear that she was dead !)

With wreaths and crosses in our hands,  
 For last good-byes we went,  
 And all our hearts were pricked to see  
 Her face of glad content !

It seemed to say she'd fought life through,  
 But thanked God it was o'er,  
 And turned from earth and us with smiles  
 We had not seen before.

Then line by line her tale came out—  
 The bravest deeds she'd done  
 Were blossoms from the tender love  
 The woman felt for one !

Such bitter wrongs as she had borne,  
 While scattering pity wide !  
 (But she had sued for justice once—  
 And she had been denied !)

The very faults she most deplored  
 Were little but the trace  
 Of wrongs which scar a suffering soul,  
 As blows might mar a face !

Yet we had sat at ease, nor joined  
 Her battles for the right :  
 Nor had she only foes before,  
 But "friends" behind, to fight.

For all about her broken life  
 We found the stones we'd thrown :  
 And now it was no use to sigh,  
 "Oh, had we only known !"

ISABELLA FVIE MAYO



## THE TOMBS OF THE CALIPHS.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THE BRETONS AT HOME," "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," ETC., ETC.



A HOUSE-WELL.

IT was a glorious morning, even for Egypt. The sun had risen over Cairo with its accustomed splendour. Solitary and alone we had watched the phases of transition from the roof of the Hôtel d'Angleterre: a grateful solitude. All the disturbing element, the thousand and one voices that, waking, are never still, were at rest. For them, the loveliest hour of the daily round meant nothing more than daybreak. In vain the sun painted the skies as Turner himself never imagined them; like the sluggard, they all slumbered and slept, deaf to the call of this incense breathing morn.

From the roof of the hotel we watched the changes. It was scarcely twilight when we had gone up amongst the pigeons and the chimney-

pots. The evening star still hung in the west, pure, pale and liquid: a perfect gem in a fathomless setting. Eastward the Mosque of

Mohammed Ali crowned the citadel. From some neighbouring minaret came the clear voice of the muezzin, bidding the faithful to prayer. The traveller crossing the desert, the fellah hastening through the street to his daily work—the one in response to the sun, the other at the bidding of the voice—would spread their carpet or handkerchief, and fall upon their knees. Still rang the cry of the muezzin. "Prayer is better than sleep!" he declared. "Allah! Allah! Allah! There is no God but God!" There are no bells here to call the worshippers together, but never was bell so impressive as this human voice penetrating the air in the stillness of the early morning. It thrills the listener even though he be no follower of the False Prophet, and insensibly the heart is drawn upwards; he too worships, but in his own way and after his own creed.

The city was quiet and sleeping. Had it been midsummer, at this hour there would already have been stir and activity abroad; for the people are early risers. The streets would have begun to look like the busy hive they generally are; caravanserais to be on the move, with their long strings of heavily-laden camels and their small crowd of merchants trafficking in precious stones, in rich Persian and Oriental brocades, in the spices of Arabia; the banks of the Nile to awaken, boats and ferries to shoot to and fro with their freights, human, animal, and vegetable; the broad quays of the harbours to tremble as the perfumed bales were thrown about in the process of loading and unloading the merchant vessels moored so picturesquely to their sides.

But it was midwinter: summer weather for us Europeans, a time of more or less endurance to the chilly African; and so Cairo and its people were still sleeping. It was not a Friday; it was not a holy day; no crowd of palm-laden worshippers was hastening towards the cemetery to pay its devotions to the tombs of Sheykhs and saints, and dole out its charity to the poor.

Paler grew that wonderful star in the west. The sky was gorgeous with crimson flames and flashes. All the mosques and minarets of the city seemed steeped in a rich orange glow. The opal tints of the north were pure and beautiful as they ever are. Then a sudden subtle change announced sunrise; it needed no signal-gun to tell the moment: Nature herself marked it beyond all doubt. The crimson succeeded to gold; Venus, clothed with modesty before this fiery lord of the day, made herself invisible. Nothing could be more wonderful than the changes of sky and atmosphere; the gorgeous colours that flashed and flamed, and seemed to appear only to die out the next moment, making the whole scene subtle as a perfume, intangible as the whispering of the leaves.

And all this beauty was lost upon a sleeping world. By the time the sleepers awoke and stretched lazily, and thought it time to get up, and breakfast, and begin the daily round and join in the daily babel,

the earth had put off her celestial garb, and in the flat, equal light of the broad day, beauty and romance had died out. Yet, after all, it was only a question of degree. In this rarefied atmosphere, under these Eastern skies, beauty never dies. It is always there, hand in hand with the picturesque, the historical, the religious, the traditional ; surrounding the thoughtful student of life and nature with an atmosphere in which romance and reality are so closely blended that it is impossible sometimes to say where the one ends and the other begins.



BEFORE SUNSET.

We came down from our house-top that morning very much disposed to moralize : perhaps, with the weakness of human nature, feeling slightly superior to those who wasted all this magnificent reality, these gorgeous effects, in dreamland. It needed the voice of the Prophet—not the False Prophet—to arouse them with his warning : “Sleepers, wake ! a voice is calling !” And the voice heard in all that painted sky, intangible, evanescent though it may be, was heavenly and divine. But the prophets are sleeping their long sleep, and the days of prophecies and miracles are over. The voices are silent.

After breakfast—one cannot live upon brilliant skies and rainbow atmospheres—we decided to visit the Tombs of the Mamelukes, and communicated our wish to our dragoman. As he was agreeable, even approved, the matter was settled.

"Yes, sir; you cannot do better. It is not a special morning" (meaning some special sight or entertainment not to be done at any other time), "and it is very fine." In point of fact, it was always fine, but Aleck loved to give reasons and to hear himself talk.

"How had we better go?" we inquired.

"Nothing so good as donkeys, sir," he replied; "especially for those old mosques and tombs. They are full of up-and-down steps, narrow passages, and broken roads, where carriages cannot pass. I will order some fine animals."

True to his word, the fine animals were at the door in half-an-hour. We were just about to mount with much humility of mind, when Osman appeared upon the scene; dashing up in the equipage that had met him at the station.

"I see I am just in time," he cried. "Wherever you were going, dismiss your donkeys and come with me. I have a fervent desire this morning to visit my old friends the Mameluke tombs and mosques; and we must see them together. *Les beaux esprits se rencontrent*,—I believe you were about to do the same."

"The very same," we returned. "And to exchange our humble quadrupeds for your luxurious chariot, is like entering the field of battle a commoner and leaving it a duke."

Osman laughed. "Did not something very like that happen to your Wellington?" he asked. "A man for whom I, like the rest of the world, have ever had the highest admiration; for he was great, not only on the battle-field, but in all circumstances of life. A great commander is not very often also a great statesman."

"May not that be from want of opportunity?" we asked.

"I think not," he returned. "Genius will out, and rises above the force of circumstances."

By this time we were *en route*. Aleck, bringing up the rear on donkeyback, no doubt felt, for the moment, that Othello's occupation was gone.

The streets were already well filled with people, and as far as possible they scattered right and left to make way. The mob recognized the Khedive's equipage, and Osman himself seemed well known to them. Yet with every endeavour to clear the road, we were often brought up sharply, and had to drive at a slow pace. It was not to be regretted. Streets and people were full of interest.

"The Egyptians are early risers," remarked Osman, as he looked upon the many-coloured turbans and flowing abbas that crossed our path. "They also go to bed early. Otherwise they would scarcely be ready at sunrise for their morning prayers."

"Are the women equally devotional?" we asked.

"No ; it is not expected of them. Their duties are more domestic. They are the Marthas, not the Marys of the world ; they serve and wait. Many a wife will prepare the coffee and fill the pipe whilst her lord and master is praying."

"The pipe seems more to them than the meal," we said. "They are not always eating, but they are always smoking."

"True," returned Osman. "In eating they are abstemious ; in smoking they have no moderation. And they are fastidious : as particular about their stems and mouthpieces, and as proud, as a luxurious Englishman about his collection of meerschaums. There is the 'Shibuk'—or *Chibook*, as we call it in Turkey—which, with its long stem covered with silk and ornamented with gold thread, its snake-like tube and its gaudy bowl of baked earth, is a picturesque, Eastern-looking object ; suggestive of opium, and dreams, and visions. It is generally made of a sort of maple, but many of the stems are of cherry-wood. Then there is the Persian pipe, where the smoke passes through water, and which is called 'nargeeleh,' an Arabic word meaning cocoa-nut. Again there is the pipe with a glass bowl, which is called *Sheeshah*. So, you see, smoking with the Easterns comes almost next to religion : and everyone is bound to smoke in self-defence."

"At least, they have a pleasant and inoffensive way of using their shibuks," we remarked, "which might almost be called the refinement of smoking. They make very little smoke, and have not other bad habits common to Europeans who indulge in the fragrant weed."

"True again," returned Osman. "In this one indulgence they are fastidious and refined. Their reason for making little smoke is that they swallow so much of it. The Arabic word for smoking really means *drinking tobacco*. It is an injurious habit, but they grow used to it : as the workers in the mines of Hungary grow used to eating arsenic. I believe that the human frame may accustom itself to any habit that does not directly set up organic mischief—a dangerous doctrine, perhaps. Also, after passing through four or five yards of stem and tubing, the smoke is cool and to some extent filtered. The higher classes are very particular about their tobacco. It is of an exquisite flavour and expensive. The Egyptians possess a delicate and refined, almost effeminate palate for scents and flavours. Only the choicest tobacco will suit them, and with their coffee they are wont to mix the fragrant ambergis."

"In short," we observed, "the refinements we meet with in the 'Arabian Nights' ; the perfumed atmosphere, the aromatic coffee presented to you in golden cups, the rich interiors chequered by a thousand tints as the sun falls upon the stained windows, the dreamy, half-voluptuous existence of the opium-smoker—all this exists in the life of the Arabian of to-day. Nothing is wanting excepting Aladdin's wonderful lamp and the element of magic."

"And even scarcely that," laughed Osman. "For in some houses you may clap your hands, and immediately a dozen slaves will appear

to do your bidding. An empty hall, by almost invisible means, will be transported, in less time than it takes to tell you, into a luxurious dining-room, where tables loaded with viands, with rich and rare fruits and wines, will surprise your vision, whilst perfumed waters or burning spices intoxicate your senses with a subtle vapour. The whole effect is instantaneous and magical. If ever you should come to visit me in Constantinople," he added—"as I hope you may—I will do all this for you."

"But surely you are describing the luxurious days of Antony and Cleopatra," we cried. "Such habits of ease and self-indulgence were never yours."

"There you are right," he returned, more seriously. "I hold it that simplicity of taste and habit should be the rule of life. But the machinery for all I have described to you existed before I came into the world; and if ever I employ it, it is only to astonish some friend or guest, and for a moment bring before him in reality what, in the Arabian Nights, he has enjoyed so often in imagination."

"How different is your life, how much more fervent and vivid your imagination, than anything to be found in our colder climates," we said. "There everything is the very essence of prose; all becomes matter of fact; we are frigid and unemotional as our East winds. You, on the contrary, live in a land of poetry and dreams, of delicate perfumes and rainbow tints, of violent hatred but of passionate love."

"You have your compensations," returned Osman, "and, as a nation, need never desire to be other than you are. In point of greatness I am bound to say that I think you have reached your highest. Your little island, once mistress of the world, is beginning to decline; and the decline comes to you from within. You have enemies in the camp. 'A man's foes shall be they of his own household,' may be said of you. Schism is the order of the day; your Government grows disorganised; party spirit, not the good of the country, is every man's aim. If the Conservative power in England could hold its own, there might be hope; but it will not do so. Disunion, disruption, anarchy—all this lies before you ere the 20th century has passed out of its teens. You have given the power over to the multitude; and of all classes in the world your lower class is the most hopeless. I attribute much of this to the work of one man; and you will find in the history of almost every country that has had its day that one man alone has chiefly aimed its death-blow. But forgive me. I am forgetting that it cannot be agreeable to you to listen to such prophecies, however little you may agree with me. After all, it is only my own opinion; and it lies in the future. Under the altered condition of the world, it would be impossible for you to retain the greatness you once had—even though you still possessed the great men who have left no successors. The mantle of Elijah has not fallen upon your men in high places—though if I go on prophesying at this rate you will say it has fallen upon me."



At that moment a carriage with Saïs running before it rapidly crossed our path through a street running at right angles with our own. It served to change the subject.

"One of the Khedive's carriages," said Osman, as it disappeared, "but the Khedive is not in it. He is not well, and in fact no one but myself has seen him to-day. I do not like his look. I am persuaded that he is not really strong, and I sometimes think that in any serious illness it would go hard with him. The thought makes me tremble. Not only should I lose a true friend—he has been singularly partial to me—but Egypt would lose a wise ruler. Heaven avert such a calamity! If it ever came to pass—and if England changed her foreign policy and gave up Egypt—the consequences would be disastrous: and not for Egypt only."

Looking back as we write, this past conversation almost reads like a foreshadowing of what was before very long to happen. Osman evidently possessed the highest regard and affection for the Viceroy, a condition of mind and spirit that sometimes endows its possessor with almost a foresight of the future. There was a certain hopelessness, a melancholy in his tone which argued a fear almost amounting to prevision. He prayed that it might not happen: some latent consciousness whispered that he prayed in vain.

All the sights and sounds of Cairo were awakening. The water-carriers were crying aloud; the sellers of date-bread sat whisking behind their trays, waking up to energy whenever a customer found the delectable compound irresistible. The money-changers posted at the corners calculated the exchange of the day at ruinous interest. The teachers had begun their daily task of instructing the young idea in the bare elements of education; and the youthful prodigies were keeping up their daily tradition of making the task as hard as possible: the mischievous element ever rife amongst them.

We met the usual complement of tourists; cavalcades of twos and threes and half-dozens plodding along on donkeys—we ourselves having just escaped adding to the number. They presented the general appearance of tourists abroad; absurdities and exaggerations scarcely equalled in the pages of *Punch*, in the days when wit and humour dwelt amongst us. All these donkey-parties had their donkey-boys and their dragomans, who helped to keep up the noise and liveliness of the scene, and uphold the reputation of the country. Osman was equally amused at the foreign element.

"I see them day after day," he laughed, "but never grow used to them. Their appearance never seems less ridiculous, or their manners less exaggerated. Familiarity here does not breed contempt—nor custom stale their wonderful variety. Nine people out of ten who travel have no poetry in their soul, no true appreciation of nature. They pass from place to place only to kill time and satisfy a spirit of restlessness. The desire to lay up in store a recollection

of scenes and places and incidents all their own, for the days when the grasshopper begins to be a burden, never enters into their imagination. Half the people who travel do so with their eyes closed. But see here—we had need to keep our own well open !”

For we were passing the Mosque of Sultan Hassan, which stands out so magnificently below the citadel. It is one of the finest Mohammedan monuments in the world, and the inhabitants of Cairo are almost justified in thinking it unrivalled. Before us was its gigantic and magnificent porch, rich in that honeycombed ornamentation that is so effective, so delicately refined and beautiful. A splendid cornice crowned its lofty walls. A long narrow shabby flight, of steps led up to the doorway, protected by a simple railing. An old guardian stood near the entrance, who, on seeing Osman, advanced and bowed with every sign of reverence. Osman returned the salutation.

“ You are well known here,” we observed.

“ These men have a wonderful memory for faces,” returned Osman. “ Besides that, they have frequently seen me with the Khedive, and fancy that I possess unlimited power and influence. Lastly, I spend much of my spare time in wandering about these old mosques, and losing myself in dreams of the past ; imagining the lives of those who trod these stones centuries ago ; of those who raised these wonderful monuments with a strength of purpose we have altogether lost. See,” he continued, “ on the one hand you have a monument to departed greatness, and on the other hand evidence of our own inability to accomplish what is truly great.”

He pointed to a new mosque opposite to that of Hassan, in course of construction. It was intended to outrival the mosque of the Sultan, but long before completion was abandoned : and now remains unfinished, a reproach to those whose ambition was greater than their power. They had begun to build without counting the cost.

It was a wonderful scene. We were now in the immense open space of the Place Roomeleh, where all was life and movement. It was crowded with Egyptians, many of them squatting upon the ground ; camels and donkeys near them, men buying and selling, lounging in idleness, divided into groups. Others thronged together, hustling each other, as intent upon gaining their own small ends as if the fate of the world depended upon success or failure. About all there was a certain grace ; a grace of movement ; a grace even in repose, the greater perhaps that it was unconscious and unstudied. Their garments clothe the form without disturbing its symmetry. Many were passing rapidly to and fro ; to distant parts of the town ; to destinations perhaps far beyond the town. The scene was full of animation. Before us rose the wonderful mosque with its gigantic walls, richly ornamented windows, magnificent cornice ; the beautiful dome towering in dignity and grandeur, whilst the minarets at each corner, unequal in height, but equal in grace



"TOURISTS" IN DIFFICULTIES.

and charm, completed the picture. Again we were gazing upon a scene out of the Arabian Nights. Beyond all lay the city, with its flat roofs, its innumerable mosques and minarets ; all enveloped in an Eastern atmosphere not to be found elsewhere. Above us stood the citadel in proud seclusion, crowning the indestructible rock on which it stands, and guarding, as it seemed, the Mosque of Mohammed Ali.

"It is all a dream ; an Eastern dream," said Osman ; "and although I may be said almost to belong to it by birth and training, I am ever more and more attracted and enchanted. I have seen all the countries of the world and the glories of them ; places and people at their best ; the Himalayas of India, the Alps of Switzerland, the sunny vineyards of Italy, the wide Nevada plains of Granada, crowned by the glorious Alhambra, the wonderful Bay of Naples in the south, the fjords and glaciers of the North, the matchless beauties of Ceylon : but nothing of these has ever attracted or impressed me as do some of the old mosques of Cairo, that wonderful panorama from the citadel, with the solemn pyramids, the windings of the sacred Nile in the distance ; and at our feet those matchless and superb tombs of the Caliphs that we are about to visit. Not that they have half as much to do with the Caliphs as with the Mamelukes. And if it were only for these monuments alone we must forgive the wild and lawless reign of those slave-sovereigns. The lot is cast into the lap, and wonderful are the changes and vicissitudes in the history of nations and of individuals !"

We passed under the shadow of the citadel into the hot, white, dusty road, leading to the celebrated tombs. As Osman had said, everything about us was a dream ; we felt as if we must presently awaken to all the prosy commonplace realities of everyday life. And everything was more or less a ruin. The very road itself seemed a ruin, covered as it was with débris of bricks and mortar that had been crumbling there for ages. A scene of which the eye could never grow weary : an accumulation of mosques, and tombs large, expansive, imposing enough to be temples : that indeed were such. The whole surrounding tone was dazzling ; a fawn-colour of the purest and most refined description ; a colour so like the plains of the desert that it almost seemed as if the shifting sand had consolidated to form them. Domes and minarets rose in perfect proportions, exquisite outlines against the brilliant blue of the unbroken sky. There was a golden tint upon all. The sun might have been the artist—had been so in part ; giving his own glorious imperishable glow to the matchless buildings. There were windows of wonderful tracery, and doorways of exquisite design. We were surrounded by Saracenic architecture of the purest description. Here again were all the marvels of the "Arabian Nights," but exceeding all we had ever imagined.

We had left the carriage and were now walking amongst these

wonders, scarcely knowing which way to turn, where all seemed to claim one's attention.

"Is it not wonderful?" cried Osman, with almost boyish enthusiasm, whilst his eyes flashed with excitement and his whole countenance lighted up with pleasure. "Could you not come here and muse and contemplate and lose yourself day after day, all the days of your life? It is not only an assemblage of tombs, but a veritable dead city. Could anything look more desolate and deserted? We might be gazing upon a vision in the vast wilderness: a mirage that will presently dissolve and disappear, leaving, as Shakespeare says, not a wreck behind!"

The scene more than deserved all the praise, all the enthusiasm he gave it. Over all Time had laid his beautifying finger, and the aspect of partial ruin, of crumbling walls, of domes and minarets touched with decay, added no little to the charm and enchantment of these "Tombs of the Caliphs."

"A city of the dead," repeated Osman. "For here in days gone by dwelt a large number of sheykhs and their followers. These, with their families, made up quite a population, and as the tombs were richly endowed, everything flourished. The Caliphs really had their tombs within Cairo itself, on the site of what is now one of the chief bazaars. As you know, these ancient Arab sovereigns reigned in Egypt as independent princes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One solitary tomb still remains in the centre of the bazaar; you must have remarked it."

"Looking singular and out of place: an emblem of death and decay in the midst of one of the most crowded and busiest scenes in Cairo," we replied.

"Perhaps it has its uses," said Osman, smiling, "and may bring to the minds of some, in the midst of their sale and barter, that for each and all must the end come. My own two favourite mottoes have been the mottoes of a famous Eastern Sultan: 'This also must pass away,' and 'Look well to the end.' That tomb in the midst of the busy mart seems to be ever repeating the warnings. In 1292, when the bazaar was founded, it is said that all the tombs with this one exception were destroyed, and the bones of the dead were scattered amidst the rubbish heaps outside the city walls; some may have lain on the very spot on which we are standing, for all we know; and at night these tomb-mosques, these deserted thoroughfares, might well be haunted by the spirits of those whose graves were desecrated. Perhaps if we come here to-night at the witching hour they will appear to us."

"A long unrest," we laughed. "It is seven hundred years ago. What a penance for the departed!"

"But with them," returned Osman, "time is annihilated. Seven hundred years or seven million years will be the same. There is no dating forward, as with us. Few of us live in the present. It is

always to-morrow, or next week, or next year; the mind is ever stretching forward. Imagine the REST of an existence where this dating forward has ceased, and the present is all in all; where there is no future, because there is no limit."

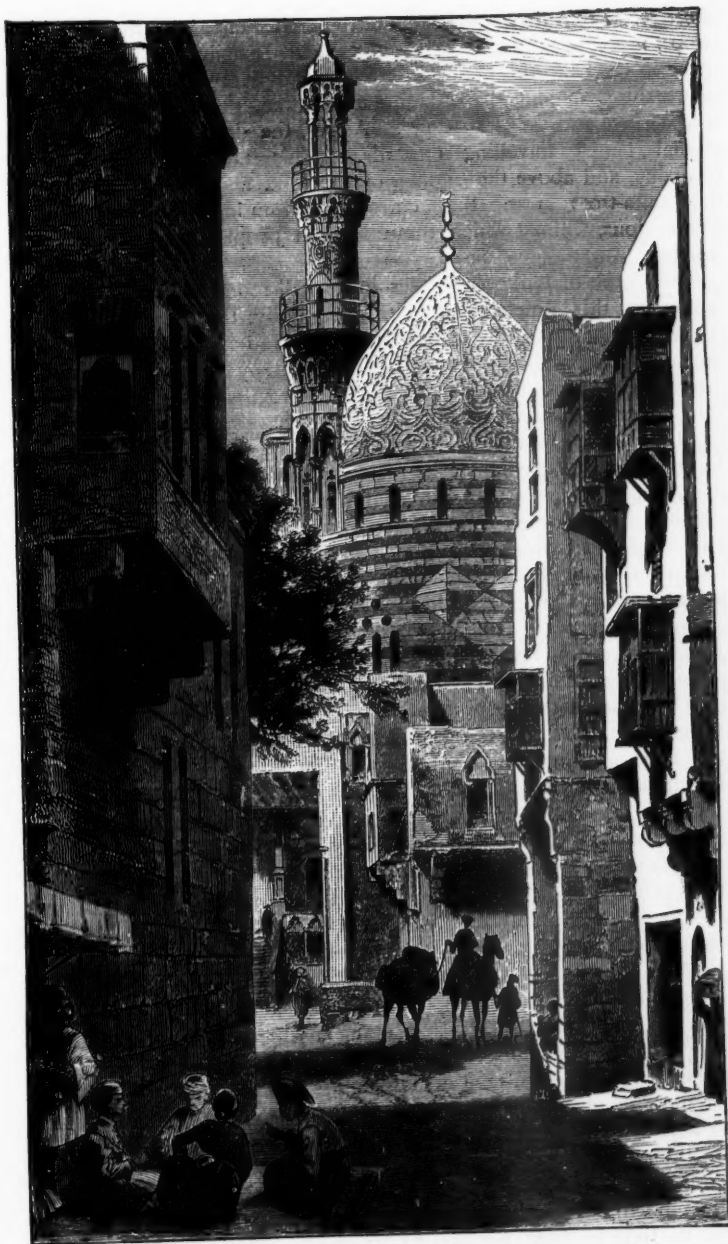
We were standing in front of the mosque-tomb of Barkook, the first of the Circassian Mameluke Sultans. It dates from the year 1382—784 of the Hejira—and was built by Barkook towards the close of his reign: a reign signalled by many victories, and much tyranny and bloodshed.

We stood silent before the building. Of its kind, Cairo possesses nothing to compare with it. Its superb tone was matchless; its charm infinitely added to by an appearance of semi-ruin; crumbling walls on which Time had laid his softening and refining hand. At each of the north and south extremities rose a magnificent dome, still perfect and uninjured. Beneath the one lie the bodies of the male members of the dynasty; beneath the other, those of the female. Here in this matchless monument, this mausoleum without rival, they repose in their last long sleep, glorious in death, whatever they might have been in life: a long rest, a solemn calm indeed, as compared with the tyranny and turmoil, the excesses and cruelties of their reigns.

In the centre was a small cupola, whilst two minarets, also perfect and beautiful and scarcely touched by Time, rose in slender and narrowing stages of utmost grace, pointing to the blue of the matchless sky—a singular contrast to the substantial proportions of the domes. The walls were crowned by a series of battlements in the form of the trefoil. The minarets rise from the west end of the building, which is rectangular. The first stage was square and had no other ornamentation than its trefoil windows, ending in a light graceful balcony; the second stage was circular, ornamented with broken lines, which relieved the plainness of the surface; the third and last stage was a slender column, pierced, and through its open work one caught glimpses of the far off sky. These minarets were once crowned by small cupolas, which must have added to their charm and Oriental feeling, but they have disappeared under the hand of time. They are of the purest, most Saracenic architecture; only equalled by the minaret of the small but exquisite Mosque of Kait-Bey.

Two crumbling and beautiful doorways once gave access to the interior—one to the N.W., the other to the S.W. The former and larger is now disused: an architrave of alabaster, with trefoil ornamentation. The S.W. doorway, like much of the tomb, is in a ruinous state. Through this one entered an outer vestibule and passed into a light and elegant gallery leading to the large square court. This court or quadrangle was surrounded on three sides by porticos; square pillars supporting double-pointed arches of limestone, alternately white and red, rich in all the matchless tones of antiquity. Between the arches were small caps or head-pieces of brick, singular but



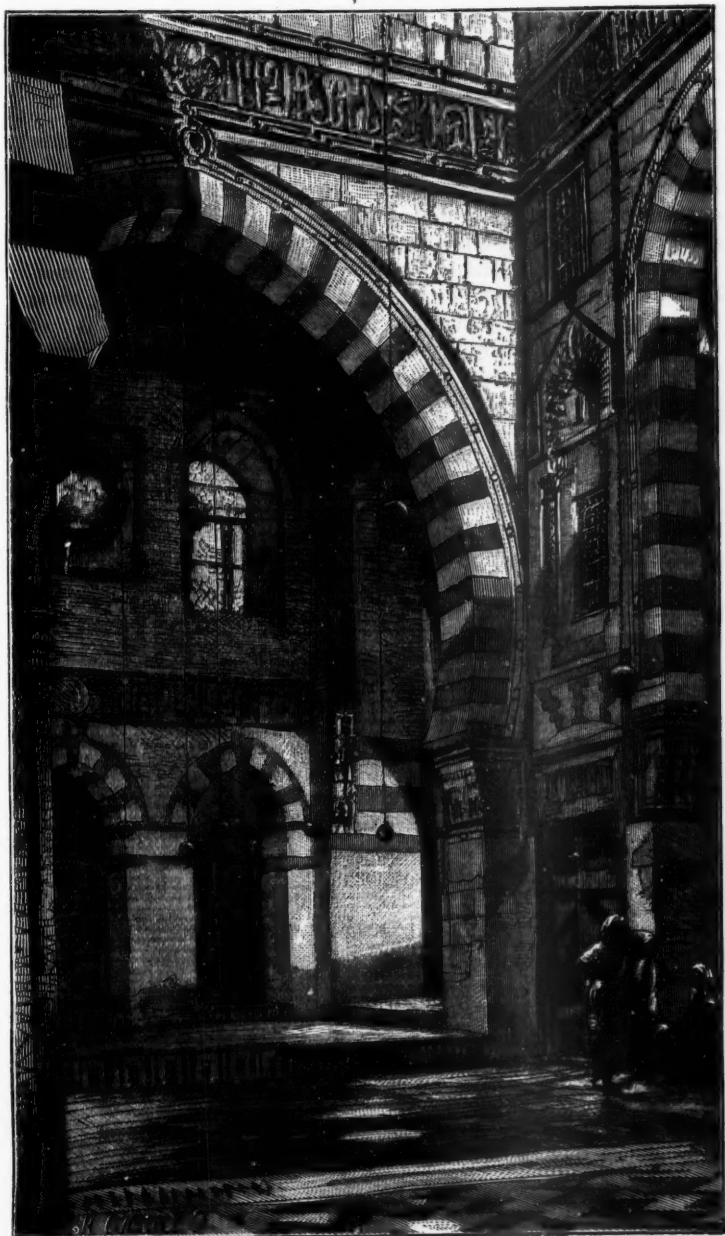


STREET IN CAIRO.

effective. From the cross-beams of the arches once hung innumerable lamps, most of which have disappeared. Imagination pictures the scene in the centuries gone by. Night and darkness; a large crowd of worshippers, and these lamps all lighted, throwing out ghostly glimmerings and weird shadows. Above, the dark sky, with its own eternal lamps travelling onwards. This must have been oft recurring, and above the sighing of the wind and the whispering of the palm-trees rose the curious murmurings amidst infinite genuflexions, without which these Eastern people know not how to worship.

The Tomb of Barkook reposes in a small room to the left of the sanctuary, this sanctuary being marked by three ranges of six columns, very beautifully disposed. The tomb itself is a large stone catafalque, very simply carved, surrounded by a more elaborately carved wooden railing. The cross-beams from which the lamps once hung are partly broken away. The lamps have disappeared. Small, beautiful trellised windows, long and narrow, crowned by rose windows, admit the daylight. These were once filled with the richest glass, which bathed the tomb chamber in rainbow tints: the dim religious light which appeals so strongly to the imagination. The angles of the roof are filled in by niches elaborately honeycombed and very charming in effect. Narrow bands of decoration containing Cufic inscriptions entwine themselves about the windows and roses. It is all wonderfully graceful and refined. The great courtyard or quadrangle looks ruined and neglected. Grass grows between the stones; heaps of crumbling rubbish lie here and there; in the centre is the fountain used in days gone by for washing. Its source is dried up; the great basins are empty; all has a sad and suggestive appearance. A group of stunted and melancholy trees surrounds the fountain, and they seem for ever to be whispering the same burden: *OUR GLORY HAS DEPARTED*. The words appear to shine out above every portico, on every ruined wall, on the slender minarets that seem to raise appealing hands to the skies in protest of all this change and desolation. From their summits the form of the muezzin is no longer seen, his voice no longer heard, bidding the faithful to prayer. In this dead city there are none to hear.

"And it has departed for ever," said Osman, as we stood near the fountain looking round upon the building. "The day will come when not one stone will be left upon another. Those fine domes, those slender minarets which now charm us so unspeakably, will gradually vanish and disappear. No one cares about preserving these matchless monuments; it seems that there is no one to care. To the Khedive I have over and over again pointed out the necessity that something should be done. He seems to think it hopeless. Having a difficult position to fill, occupied with the cares of the state, a monarch without all a monarch's privileges and freedom, he appears to have no time to spare, no thought to give to crumbling ruins. And



TOMB-MOSQUE OF KAIT-BEY.

as I have told you, there sometimes comes over him a sadness and depression when I am with him alone, which seems to me almost like a foreshadowing of some evil to come.

"Let us hope you are mistaken," we returned earnestly. "He is too good a man to be spared; though it is hard for us who cannot see the end from the beginning to say who can best be spared. No doubt the earth is gradually working out a destiny fore-ordained in the councils of eternity. But these tombs of the Caliphs—it does indeed seem terrible that they should perish for want of care."

"One's only consolation is that restoration would take so much from their beauty," said Osman. "All restored monuments lose far more than they gain—but they are preserved. We now see these tombs at their best and loveliest. The refining finger of Time is upon them, the charm and melancholy of semi-ruin. But my favourite of all is the small mosque-tomb of Kait-Bey. Let us to it. I shall be surprised if you are not enchanted."

The distance was not great; the walk was a wonder and delight. We were surrounded by these glorious and half-ruined monuments. It was a thoroughfare of tombs, where dwelt eternal silence and repose. On every hand were vestiges of the past; the grand past ages of work and will and accomplishment, sullied in the case of the Mamelukes by tyranny and excesses that led to ruin and annihilation. Our road was marked by thick white dust; we left our footprints deep in the sand which blows up in drifts from the desert: veritable footprints in the sands of time. Heaps of loose stones and rubbish lay crumbling about, remnants of the buildings of past ages. We raised our eyes, and broken walls met our gaze, full of beauty and sadness; exquisite domes and cupolas and minarets, all outlined against that wonderful sky. And we had it to ourselves: all the world and his wife seemed to have gone other ways—up the Nile, or to the Boulak Museum, or the Pyramids: anywhere but here, and we profited by the solitude. A crowd would have destroyed all the charm of the scene. We were also early—one of the great secrets of enjoyment in travelling.

Turning our faces southwards, we passed on the left a dome which belongs to an unrecorded tomb. What being—sultan or sultan's wife, or great uncrowned head—sleeps beneath this nameless grave will never be known. Perhaps it is the resting-place of one who, spiritually and mentally, was above his fellows, to whom the world had proved a vain delusion, and who wished to pass out of life and "make no sign," sleeping for ever in the blessedness of "a great obscurity." Next came the tomb-mosque of El Ashraf, a mighty man of valour, who took prisoner John III., King of Cyprus, exacting an annual tribute for his release. He concluded a peace with the Tartars, took possession of Jeddah, securing all the Indian trade that flowed into this Meccan port, and in other ways distinguished his short reign from 1422 to 1438: though it was long in comparison

with the reigns of many of the Mamelukes. The exterior of the mosque has a network of arabesques, and its cupola is especially graceful; in contradistinction to the minaret, which is dwarfed, and consists of three stages—square, octagonal, and circular. The interior is oblong, divided by two ranges of pointed arches, resting on columns. The pavement, consisting of coloured stones, is very fine; but on the whole the impression of the interior is more or less that of a ruin. Above the tomb-chamber rises the exquisite dome. In the immediate neighbourhood of this mosque are other mosques and tombs, cupolas, domes, and minarets: one the burial-place of the members of the family of Mabed er-Rafáee, the great saint; another called the Tomb of the Seven Maidens: a legend supposed to be borrowed from the Seven Sleepers—for there is no other record of their existence.

Still with our faces turned southwards we passed into a somewhat different scene. Before us rose the wonderful tomb-mosque of Kait-Bey, the most important of all the sultans of his dynasty; the most important of the tombs, though not the largest, and giving its name to the whole district of the Tombs of the Caliphs. It stands on a considerable elevation, so that its solitary cupola and minaret are, as they were intended to be, very conspicuous. It appears to be the centre of a small village or settlement, for here amidst the tombs of the dead, are small habitations for the living. Such as they are, they are crowded with beings, who were in full evidence. Hitherto our progress through the Tombs of the Caliphs had been marked by a profound silence, abandonment, and desolation. Our own footsteps, our own voices, alone awoke the startled echoes of the desolated quadrangles and melancholy tomb-chambers. Here, on the contrary, surrounding the tomb of Kait-Bey, were sounds and sights of life in its most commonplace element. Narrow lanes or thoroughfares ran between high walls; and here children played, and ran up to us with outstretched hands asking for *backsheesh*; and women and maidens went to and fro to the well, filling their pitchers, and carrying them with that grace which seems inseparable from the Eastern woman.

We did not like the change. The sacredness of the precincts appeared sullied; the charm broken. But it quickly returned as we gave our undivided attention to the tomb itself. To our left was the public fountain, and above it the children's school.

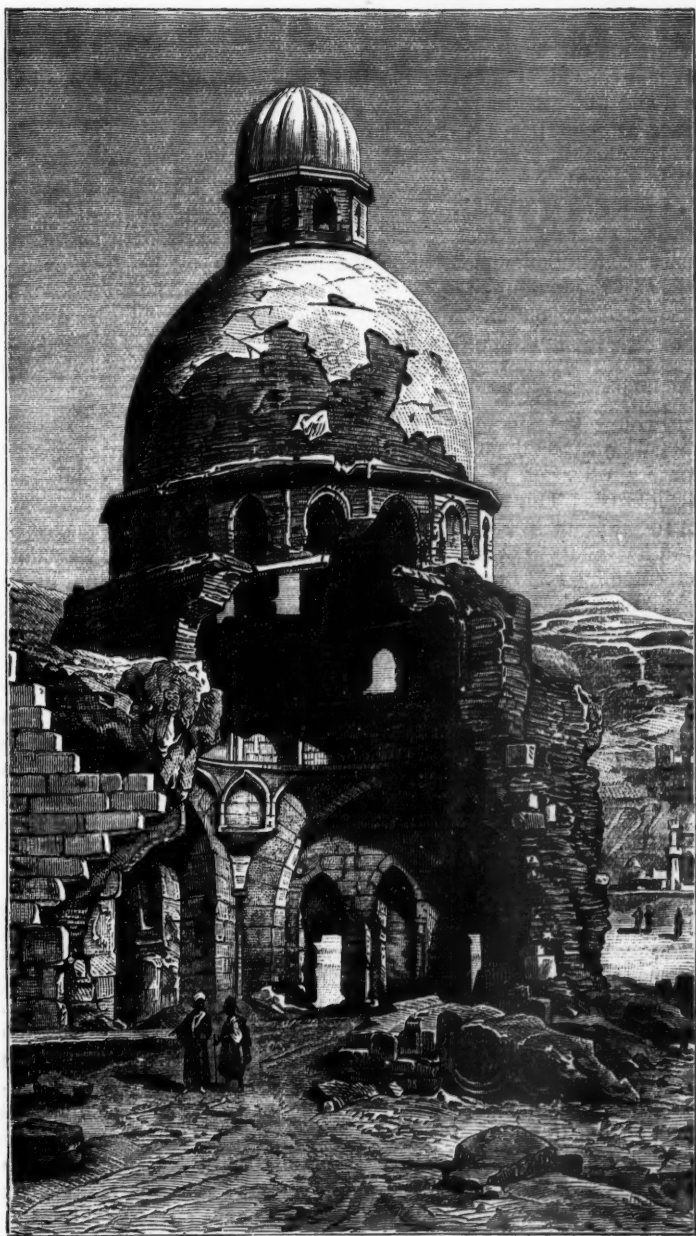
The tomb is the best preserved of all the tombs of the Caliphs. As a model of the grace and elegance of the Eastern school of architecture, it is unrivalled, far surpassing all the Western buildings of its age. The style is the very antipodes of the Greek school, with its simplicity, its pure and severe outlines; yet though the one may appeal more forcibly to the intellect, one's sense of severity, the other more closely appeals to the imagination. But it is so surrounded by small habitations that it is difficult to gain any true idea of its

general effect. It was impossible to photograph it or to sketch it, excepting in detail; and even then only by risking one's limbs on heaps of crumbling rubbish; or one's life on the tops of neighbouring walls and roofs, where only cats could be sure of safety. Yet its exquisite proportions were not to be concealed. The outlines of the slender cupola are perfect, and its beauty is heightened by the network of arabesques sculptured in relief which covers with rich and fine effect. Its minaret may be taken as a model of its kind. It possesses three stages, narrowing as they proceed upwards, with projecting galleries. Galleries, windows, even the minaret itself, are decorated with exquisite sculptures.

All this is visible in detachments, as it were, from the uncomfortable vantage-grounds we have described, where human beings who are only bipeds have to tread lightly, taking their courage in both hands. These tombs, once so richly endowed, had their revenues confiscated at the commencement of the century; the Sheykhs, their families and followers, had to leave the precincts and make fresh homes for themselves. But some of the poorer dependants remained, and the people now inhabiting the small tenements in the neighbourhood of the Kait-Bey tomb are their descendants. The tombs themselves, no longer endowed, are, as we have said, gradually falling to ruin. Infinitely beautiful, they were not built of the solid material of the Pyramids or the old Egyptian temples, over which five thousand years have passed as a mere moment of time: for the hand of man, not the lapse of ages, is chiefly responsible for the almost imperishable ruins that line the banks of the Nile: for the broken shafts and columns of temples that lie about in such countless numbers, and for the desolated cities of the plains. Thebes, Memphis, and a hundred other towns might yet be standing, if man had spared them.

The porch of the tomb of Kait-Bey was once protected by an enclosure which is now in ruins. A short flight of eight steps led up to the doorway, immediately above which rises the minaret, perfect in form, exquisite in its sculptured arabesques. The porch somewhat resembled that of the mosque of Hassan, on a reduced scale, for it was surmounted by an arch in the form of a trefoil, with honey-combed recesses and stalactite pendentives. Passing through the porch, you enter a small passage or vestibule paved with coloured stones, the walls being similarly decorated. The effect is rich and harmonious: the Easterns thoroughly understood the blending of colours, and never sacrificed refinement to richness of tone. From this, one passed into a large chamber crowned by an octagonal construction of wood, admitting daylight through narrow apertures. The arrangement of the whole interior is marked by simplicity as much as by harmony of detail and tone, and perfection of form and outline. The large, expansive, pointed circle is conspicuous. The *Liwân* is raised slightly above the *Sôlm*, separated by this same





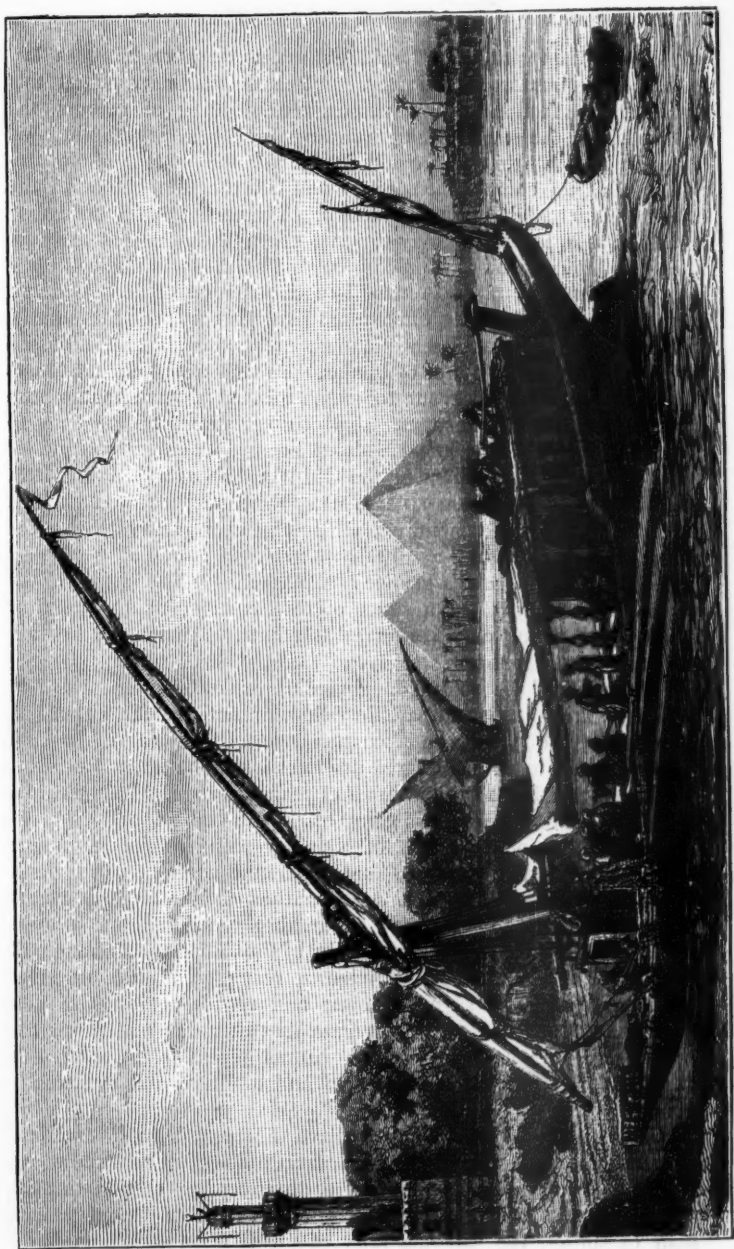
TOMB OF A MAMELUKE.

pointed arch of the beautiful and distinguishing horseshoe form. There are two large arches facing each other and two smaller arches, all constructed in alternate blocks of black and white marble, whilst red and white stripes appear on the upper walls. Thus the eye is at once arrested, but not dazzled or offended by a sense of colouring. This effect is very much added to by the windows and rosettes, filled in with coloured glass. A great part of this glass is modern, but well-chosen, whilst one or two of the windows still retaining the ancient glass are of such exquisite and refined beauty, such marvellous tracery, that they remain upon the memory almost as the crowning point of the whole building. Unfortunately they are falling into ruin : their delicate outlines are crumbling away. The ceiling is divided into beautifully sculptured panels or compartments, richly painted and gilded. The panels of the Kibla and Manbarr are ornamented with rich marble mosaics.

Behind the sanctuary is the tomb-chamber, small, but of most singularly graceful proportions. Here the windows with their perfect tracery will again at once arrest attention, for they are wonderfully sculptured. This chamber is crowned by the dome, which outwardly is so beautiful an object. Inwardly it has been very much neglected, and its beauty is of the past. The form is there, but the splendour of colouring and decoration has faded. In the angles some exquisite pendentives have been restored ; rich honeycomb work that for effect has scarcely a rival. This had been gorgeously gilded and painted—the colouring always refined ; but it charmed more as an example of its school than as any additional beauty to the chamber. The floor is paved with black and white marble, dignified and effective. On two stones of granite let in, one red, one black, is the impression of a foot, said to be that of Mohammed, brought by Kait-Bey from Mecca. The impressions are neither small nor beautiful, but are treated with great reverence ; the one being sheltered by a wooden canopy, the other by a small bronze dome.

Thus the tomb-mosque of Kait-Bey may be taken as a rare and unrivalled example of beauty and perfection. Cairo possesses nothing better, and indeed it is for such buildings as these that Cairo may consider itself architecturally famous. Apart from its tombs and mosques, its buildings are not remarkable. The tomb of Kait-Bey has even been compared with the Alhambra of Spain, which is said to possess nothing so perfect. But the comparison will scarcely hold good. Each may stand independently of the other : the famous Moorish palace holding its own from every romantic point of view, whilst the small mosque-tomb reposing outside the walls of Cairo, overlooking the Pyramids, the windings of the far-famed Nile, the plains of the boundless desert, is equally unrivalled in its situation, and possesses all the glamour, all the mystic atmosphere, that surrounds the sacred buildings of the long-past ages of the world.

“Did I not tell you that our visit to the Tombs of the Caliphs



DAHABEEH ON THE NILE.

would not disappoint you?" said Osman, as we were taking a last look at the interior of Kait-Bey. "See the harmony of all this detail, the perfection of proportions, the blending of colours, the subdued light, the marvellous tints flowing through those rich windows. There is nothing that you could change for the better. Comparatively small, its completeness gives you all the impression, all the delight, of a building infinitely larger. Those wonderful horseshoe arches have a feeling of lofty expanse about them, as well as great beauty and refinement. The niches beyond seem as vestibules leading into halls 'immeasurable to man,' like the Caverns of Kubla Khan. And to carry out the simile, our 'sacred river' is not far off," he smiled. "Everything here has been planned, proportioned, and adjusted with the consummate power of genius. In vain would our architects of the present day endeavour to match this. We have none of the greatness of the middle ages. And the greatness of the days to come will consist of vastness without beauty. That new world of America is gradually influencing the Old World; they have large ideas, and for the most part are able to carry them out; but their field is limited. Beauty, refinement, everything that charms and delights the cultivated eye and taste—to all this we must bid farewell."

"Will there not come a change?" we asked. "The history of the world seems nothing but a series of reactions; of waking up from lethargy; of falling asleep after great efforts. Human nature falls into extremes."

"Perhaps so," he returned. "Genius exhausts itself, and then human nature must, so to say, lie fallow for a time. It is hard to tell what may be going on a century hence. Science will so have developed that to all intents and purposes it will be a new world. I always feel that I was born a hundred years too soon. I should love to be here, just to see what is going on, in the year 2000."

We left the tomb-mosque of Kait-Bey with infinite reluctance. The door closed behind us, and separated us from a wonderful vision: the presentment of a dream rather than a waking reality. But it was only to pass out to another vision, another wonder. Surrounded by these marvellous Tombs of the Caliphs, crumbling walls and lofty dome and tapering minaret rising with such unearthly beauty and majesty, such solemnity and repose, against the clear unbroken sky. Here one might gaze day after day and never tire. And in their own especial way—we cannot repeat it too often—the Tombs of the Caliphs are a dream and a vision, and a matchless wonder.

"How many charmed hours have I spent here!" exclaimed Osman—we were passing the mosque-tomb of Barkook at the moment—"lost to everything on earth excepting these immediate surroundings. Early morning before sunrise; the pure and peaceful hour of sunset, the witching hour of night, when a full moon has thrown down her pale and silvery light upon this dead world, flooding



MAMELUKE CHIEF.



cupola and minaret, decaying wall and melancholy court with her 'divine effulgence!' I have seen and watched all phases, all hours of the twenty-four; sometimes mounting one of those minarets and looking down upon the sleeping moonlit scene, feeling as if I had ceased to be an inhabitant of earth, and was about to soar into the 'realms Elysian,' represented by the stars shining in such terrible and eternal silence out of that dark impenetrable sky, from whence we gain no sight or sound of the glorious world beyond. They are so far off!" he cried, a strange pain in his tones. "So far off, so much above us, so unapproachable! How often have I prayed that for a moment the heavens would open to me, and reveal for one instant all the glories that have not entered into the heart of man. And I have watched hour after hour for a sign; and none has come, presumptuous man that I am! And if it had come, so would have come my last moment, for mortal eye may not behold these glories and live. For the rest, why seek it; we have the evidence in ourselves. —Ah! there is our carriage, patiently waiting where we left it; our good servants without even a change of attitude; troubled with no such thoughts as these; satisfied with life and their limited ideas of happiness. They have no wishes unfulfilled, for their life consists only in the abundance of the things by which they are surrounded. This evening I have no engagement. I have kept myself free that we may spend it together. You must dine with me. If you are not engaged there is no impediment; if you are engaged, you must rise above circumstance. Look upon this as a royal command. We will all three come later on, and from the top of yonder minaret survey this wonderful dead city in the dead of night. You have seen the Alhambra by moonlight; you shall now see the Tombs of the Caliphs under the same magical influence, and draw comparisons. Has it not been a charming morning? And I, who have seen the tombs for the hundredth time, have enjoyed them as much as you who had never seen them before. Nay more; your hundredth visit will charm you also more than your first. So true is it that a thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

So we passed away from the Tombs of the Caliphs; the visit, together with the charm of Osman's companionship and conversation, leaving an impression upon mind and imagination that could never pass away. Very soon we were once more bowling rapidly through the crowded streets, the familiar scenes of Cairo. Behind us, the citadel with the dome and slender shafts of the mosques of Mohammed Ali, reared its lofty head towards heaven. All traces of the Tombs of the Caliphs had disappeared, shut out by the surrounding houses. From our mental vision, however, they would never fade. The streets were even more full of life and animation than when we had passed through them in the earlier morning. The money-changer was still at his post, in the very same attitude of watchfulness and eager expectation: like an eagle that, hovering over a flock of sheep, selects



its prey, and then waits its opportunity. The water-carriers and confectioners were loud in their efforts to find customers; the date sellers were whisking the importunate flies from their bread, seated behind their braziers, and patiently biding their time. "*Tout vient à qui sait attendre*,"—how true the proverb, if men would only realize and act up to it. Copts and Jews and Greeks elbowed and hustled each other, passing in and out of the bazaars, up and down the Mouski: their many-coloured turbans looking like a flower-bed in commotion. It was all wonderfully vivid and Eastern; all the Arabian Nights over again.

"You have nothing like this in the Western world," said Osman as we passed into the regions of the Esbekeeyeh Gardens on the way to our hotel—leaving the crowd behind us in the Mouski. 'Everything there pales before the gorgeousness of our Eastern life and customs. In comparison, your Western imagination is cold and dead. The difference is not greater than between your skies and these'—pointing upwards to the wonderful heavens, which in their height and depth and clearness—the wonderful golden glow which surrounded the sun and found its reflection on all things about us—certainly presented a picture never seen under the skies of Europe.

"This is all very well," laughed Osman, as he bade us good-bye for the moment. "Here you have a gorgeousness and magnificence of colouring that is not to be rivalled; it is well; it is overpowering. But wait until to-night. Wait until we find ourselves on the summit of one of those minarets, and gaze down upon a sleeping and a dead world reposing under the soft and gentle influence of the Queen of Night. If you have any poetry in your soul, then it will awaken. You will be a new being in a new world; and if you are like me, you will almost desire never to re-awaken to real life. Is not this romantic for a hard-headed diplomatist, who spends his working hours in financial problems, in interviewing monarchs, in abetting or avoiding wars, in influencing in his own small, individual way, the course of the tide that rules the world! But we are all dual beings. There is the impassive shell that faces the world and society and work, passing through life masked and cold and formal; and there is our own true self, which is kept for our solitary hours and for a select few, when we are not afraid to give expression to our higher aspirations, all our enthusiasm, all our hopes and dreams and visions; when we can stand, as it were, face to face and soul to soul with our chosen friend, and speak openly of the beauties of this world, the hopes and joys of the next; all those thoughts and themes which lie hidden in the depths of our inner consciousness, and are too sacred to be lightly disturbed. *A rivederci!* You will be with me at eight o'clock, and you will not expect the magic that I promised you in Constantinople. Our only magic to-night will lie amongst the Tombs of the Caliphs. But how glorious will it be!"

MR. WARRENNE:  
MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

A STORY RETOLD.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE village of Erlsmede, about forty miles from London, was rather remarkable for the beauty of its situation and that of the country round.

It was built upon high ground—so high, that the tower of the old church was a sort of landmark for many miles round. But the situation of the village was not too exposed; it was sheltered on all sides by trees of unusual size and antiquity. The prettiest lane in all the country was to be found leading out of this little village, down to the high London road. The hedges were deep thickets, always untrimmed, of hawthorn and hazel, overgrown with many a drooping plant of woodbine and wild-rose; while here and there a rough oak lifted its head above the bushes, and stretched its gnarled boughs over the road. The lane was always shady, always quiet; it was a slow and long ascent, though winding, and there was the choice of another road for the few carts and carriages bound to Erlsmede. The sun might chequer the path, and the thrushes sing in the deep shade of the hawthorns for many hours in the day, without a witness.

One bright morning, early in June, two little girls, of ten and twelve years old, were slowly loitering down the lane. They were dressed with great simplicity, in black frocks, and broad straw hats, from which depended long black ribbons. They carried a little wicker basket between them, in which were a few wild flowers. They were both lovely: the eldest with a brilliant complexion—bright contrasts of white and deepest rose—hair of the darkest brown plainly parted from the forehead, deep grey eyes of that steady and subdued brilliancy rarely seen but in the south of Ireland, and which more than any others might deserve the epithet of “starlike,” and a figure tall, slight, and full of a graceful energy; the younger girl, less slender, fairer, with a profusion of tangled golden hair hanging over her glowing face, and a beautiful and soft simplicity in her gestures. They paused, and the eldest untied the hat of the younger girl, and lifted it off her brow.

“How hot you are, Alice!”

“And you, too, Maud,” said the younger girl, without turning her sleepy hazel eyes towards her sister—instead of which she passed her fingers with a quick, tremulous motion across her forehead. She was blind.

"We shall soon be cool here. Do you feel the wind?" asked Maud.

"Yes; how soft it is. There is some honeysuckle close to us—look!"

"Where? I do not see it. Oh, yes! just behind you. There! I have bent down the branch. Will you like to gather it?"

"Poor mamma!" said the child, pausing in the midst of her occupation, "she was so fond of honeysuckle. Do you remember, Maud, this time last year, we used to go and search the hedges for a piece that was blown, when she was so ill?"

She stopped, not crying, for she never shed tears, but pale and trembling.

"Let us sit down," said Maud; "it is mossy here, under this oak."

Her large, dazzling eyes were swimming in tears, but she had learned already the difficult lesson which all women must learn sooner or later—to control their own feelings for the sake of others. Alice, trembling as a person trembles in an ague, leaned against her sister.

"Hark!" said Maud, trying to divert her sister, "do you hear that thrush? Does not he sing sweetly? Such a merry-looking fellow! Would not Leonard like to have a shot at him?"

"I hear something else," said Alice, raising her head; "horses' feet—two horses. People so seldom come this way."

"No, dear Alice, I hear nothing; if you will hold the basket, I will gather some of those roses. No, don't try to touch them; you will run the thorns into your fingers!"

But so daintily did Alice finger the prickly stems, that she gathered one rose after another without hurting herself. Meanwhile, for she was never mistaken, two horsemen came trotting rapidly towards the girls.

"Ah, Maud! The horses! Keep close!" cried Alice, pressing to her sister. Alice was very timid, for she had not been born blind.

But though the two girls stood close up to the hedge, one of the horses, coming quickly upon them, shied all across the lane, and then became unmanageable. Such a perversely restive animal had never come out of a stable since the days of Bucephalus.

Maud, with a sudden energy that supplied the place of strength, swung her sister a few feet up the bank, and held her there with one hand, while she looked bravely round at the threatened danger; her slender foot firmly planted forward, and her lovely face all in a glow, partly from alarm, and partly from the exertion of her attitude.

Meantime the horse leaped in the air, stood on his hind-legs, ran round in circles, and sometimes kicked out at a large Newfoundland dog, which, to complete the confusion, flew barking and bounding round the restive animal.

"Call your dog off!" cried Maud, waving her hand to the rider, who seemed to sit as comfortably as if he were in an armchair, and who rather encouraged the gambols of his four-footed friend, by spurring him repeatedly.

Alice, pale and silent from excess of terror, clung to her sister.

"Nelson, down!" said the horseman in a quick, sharp tone. The dog crouched almost at the feet of the sisters.

It was now the fancy of the horse to stand stock-still. The rider, who might have been about eighteen years old, dismounted carelessly, picked up the basket which Maud had dropped, and presented it to her. The other rider, a few years older than himself, who had prudently kept back his horse during the scuffle, now rode slowly forward.

"Maud—the horses?" said Alice, inquiringly, stretching out her hands.

"Quite still—standing in the road; don't be frightened any more," said Maud, helping her sister down from the bank.

The young man, who had dismounted, stood with one arm thrown over his horse's neck, watching the children attentively: Alice still trembling—Maud holding both her hands.

"Were *you* frightened, eh?" he asked, in a clear, quick tone, looking earnestly at Maud.

"Yes, for my sister; she is blind," said Maud, turning her large eyes straight upon the stranger's face.

"Good," said he, quickly. Then, after a short pause, "Is she blind?"

"Yes," said Maud, sorrowfully.

"You don't say so! May I have this?" he asked, taking a bit of honeysuckle from the basket.

"If you please," replied Maud, colouring; and then, taking her sister's hand, she led her quietly away, without again regarding the horsemen.

"I say, O'Neill," said the young man, mounting his horse.

"Well?"

"I like her—the tallest; she is very pretty—the sort of girl I should like to marry."

"If she were not so young," said the other, riding forward.

"She will grow older, I conclude," said the first speaker, drily, as he fastened the honeysuckle into his button-hole. "There is a little of the lion about her; but I think I rather like that."

## CHAPTER I.

### THE WARRENNES AT HOME.

MR. WARRENNE was a medical practitioner. Early in the century, when our story opens, this term was of comparatively modern date, and was applied to the pariahs of the medical profession—men who were compelled to unite the acquirements of a physician with those of a surgeon. Impossible to be more highly educated, impossible to be worse remunerated, than the medical practitioner at that time. In a country where wealth was the sole standard

of social position, and where talent was comparatively disregarded, the condition of the medical practitioner, and still more, the condition of his family, was far from enviable. He might enjoy the confidence of his patients; he might possibly be admitted to the tables of the higher classes in the neighbourhood. But his family held an uncertain and slippery position, the most trying to the manners and the most teasing to the temper that can be conceived. No gentleman ought then to have entered this profession. He was galled and wounded at every step. He found success evade his grasp like the rainbow, unless he could descend to a multitude of wretched frauds which no gentleman can ever learn to practise. And a large number of medical practitioners not being gentlemen, he found the greater part of his practice swept out of his hands by artifices which excited his disdain, but which equally emptied his pocket. For Mr. Warrenne was a gentleman. His family traced their origin to one of those hardy pirates of the Mediterranean who founded some of the oldest French and Italian houses.

One of his ancestors had served in the Court of Charlemagne, and it had been his particular duty to hand the inkstand to the accomplished monarch, when he affixed, literally, his sign-manual to papers of state. A descendant of this man had migrated to England, after the capture of Robert, the Conqueror's son, and another Warrenne had brought from the Holy Land the crest (the panther's head erased) which was in use in the family at the present day.

But Mr. Warrenne's great-grandfather ran through every acre that belonged to the family, and so put a finishing stroke to the gentility of the house. Mr. Warrenne's father was recommended by a relation to engage in the medical profession, and in an evil hour he complied. He had enjoyed a flourishing practice in the neighbourhood, where his son now followed in his steps. But various causes had contributed to diminish the number of Mr. Warrenne's patients. Some old and staunch friends had died; but many families had withdrawn from his care, some because his politics varied from their standard of excellence, and others because his religious views were neither factious nor factitious enough to meet the exact wishes of the more enthusiastic among his patients; for it was a recognised fact that a medical man might think only about his pills and potions, and was not permitted to form or to express an opinion on the two most important interests of mankind—*for*, we live in a free country.

It was comfortable to Mr. Warrenne to reflect that he had never lost a patient except from a cause that was honourable to himself; but this consolation would not put money in his purse.

Happily he had enough to subsist upon, even though fortune had played him a more slippery turn—and this made him unpopular. People were very angry when they found that they could not starve the man, do what they would.

The eldest son had died. He had four children now living; the

eldest of these was a surgeon in the Company's service, the second was about to accept a situation as clerk in a merchant's house, the two youngest were girls—already introduced to the reader; but now, where my story begins, almost grown to women.

His wife, a woman of remarkable beauty, had died of consumption many years back, under singular and painful circumstances. Her disorder had appeared to be arrested, and Mr. Warrenne had left her for a few days without hesitation to transact some business of importance in London. The night before his return she died. Alice, the youngest child, was sleeping with her, and on waking in the morning, discovered that she was motherless. The terror struck her blind; but her blindness was not immediate; she was attacked by amaurosis, and in a few weeks was deprived of sight.

There was not a ray of hope for her recovery; all the skill of science could avail nothing in that form of the complaint. A few years afterwards, and another affliction visited the family. The eldest son, who was preparing for orders, and who had gained high honours at college, was seized with brain fever, and carried to the grave at the end of a few weeks. Mr. Warrenne never mentioned his name, and any allusion that might suggest his memory would render him grave and silent for hours. When his wife died, he withdrew at once from all attempt at society—he had experienced the unsatisfactory nature of their irregular and embarrassed interchange of visits with the neighbours—and he was too glad to put a stop to it at once. His beautiful daughters, therefore, stood a great chance of remaining on his hands—they went to no balls, and gave no dinners—but Mr. Warrenne liked their company, and he had laid up some money that he might not be under the necessity of selling them.

But they were very happy, considering. Mr. Warrenne had given them an education very much above their station, and this circumstance, together with the old pirate blood that would sometimes stir in their veins, prevented their being quite so humble as their position required. The retired hosiers on the Hill often remarked that those Warrennes did not seem to know their places; but this must have been partly a conjecture of the hosiers, because they merely saw the Warrennes passing to church, or walking in the evenings among the surrounding lanes.

They lived in an old white house roofed with tiles, which stood in a sort of courtyard with large chestnut trees overshadowing the front windows. A passage paved with coloured tiles ran through the house, and terminated in a door, half glass, which opened into the garden; a long straight strip of ground divided by an old wall from the orchard, a square plot of the deepest and greenest turf, was bordered by a belt of trees and evergreens, that served as a screen to divide the kitchen-garden from that appropriated to flowers. Never was such a wall for all kinds of choice fruit—peaches, nectarines, apricots, and the finer kind of plums—never was such a gay parterre



as the border beneath that south wall—never were peas and strawberries, and all sorts of vegetables and fruit in earlier profusion than in that garden. And it was tended by a very singular image of old Adam—a hump-backed German, who, having followed Mr. Warrenne home from Leyden many years back, when he had given himself a six weeks' holiday to the Continent, had remained a fixture in the family ever since, and was likely so to continue as long as he lived.

The other remarkable character on the premises was Mr. Warrenne's white horse, who is destined to play an important, though unconscious, part in this history.

## CHAPTER II.

### IN THE SHRUBBERY.

BUT though the Warrennes did not give dinners, they had one or two friends. The Creswicks, whose grounds were only divided from their garden by a narrow lane, were their nearest neighbours; and though they employed Mr. Warrenne in a medical capacity, were disposed to be courteous to his family.

Colonel Creswick was a frightful little man, with an immense red nose, and a row of long yellow teeth, which he was always displaying. He intended his gestures to be very insinuating; and it is possible that a strong-minded person might contemplate him without a shudder. Mrs. Creswick was very tall, and so extremely thin that it was astonishing how she contrived to exist. Her hair, once as black as night, was now perfectly grey; her eyebrows, drawn straight above her dark-blue eyes, still retained their raven hue. Her forehead was wide and noble; her nose very thin, and of a bad outline; her mouth firm, with thin, flexible lips, always fast closed in repose. While you spoke to her, those searching eyes were fixed steadily on your face, watching every shade of expression; but you could never detect a movement on her part which seemed to denote that she breathed. It was almost terrible: it was the face of an accusing spirit; and a person would be very bold to hazard a falsehood beneath the gaze of that earnest countenance.

The Colonel and herself were always scrupulously polite to each other. He called her madam—sometimes dearest madam—and bent his hideous face sideways, like a bird, when he addressed her; and she replied in few words, civil, calm, and stern, which had usually the effect of reducing him to silence. Maud Warrenne used to think that there was some fearful mystery between them; but the mystery was—the marriage of two persons so dissimilar.

They had no children; but Mrs. Creswick's brother, a gentleman high in the civil service in India, had begged that she would take the charge of his only daughter, until he returned to England. She accepted the office, and received the young lady at the Ferns, during

the pauses of her education at a very expensive finishing school. But, an heiress and a spoilt child, Florence Reynolds had formed her own character without Mrs. Creswick's assistance. At the age of eighteen she left school, and came to reside permanently with her aunt, until her father should arrive to claim her. She had, for the last six years, been learning everything, and therefore it is needless to remark that she knew nothing; but she was a beauty as well as an heiress, and her ignorance rather enhanced her attractions with the reasoning sex.

It had been the wish of Mrs. Creswick to encourage an intimacy between Maud Warrenne and her niece; but there existed no good understanding between these young ladies. Florence, proud of her beauty, her fortune, and the marked deference always paid to her expectations by her aunt's guests, was not ambitious to cultivate the acquaintance of the daughter of their medical man; and, perhaps, with all her vanity, it sometimes crossed her mind that Maud, in her white frock and straw bonnet, was superior to herself in intelligence, in character, and even in beauty. Maud, therefore, was subject to the heiress's scornful indifference, or, still more galling, to her punctilious condescension. Keenly sensible of the difference in their fortunes, and still more deeply conscious of the older blood that her own family could boast, she bore the obnoxious manners of Miss Reynolds in haughty silence; and would never have crossed her path, but for the sincere affection she felt for Mrs. Creswick.

Maud had fulfilled her early promise of beauty. At eighteen she was an exquisite specimen of the Norman style, which is directly opposed to the attributes of Grecian beauty. The long slender neck, the elegant, but almost attenuated limbs, the slight flexible waist, are entirely distinct from the full and massive undulations of the Greek form. Her dark grey eyes, with their long eyelashes, looked almost black by candle-light. Her Norman nose, sharply defined, and raised boldly from the face, with high, well-cut nostrils, and the fine, slight expression of her upper lip, gave a spiritual outline to her countenance; while her dark brown hair and eyebrows seemed almost painted upon her clear, broad forehead, so striking was the contrast of their colour.

Florence Reynolds was rather above the middle height, by no means slight in her person, though her waist was beautifully small. She had a remarkable profusion of the very lightest brown hair, almost of a flaxen colour—long, half-opened blue eyes, a high slight nose, and a mouth the colour of a rose-leaf. Her complexion was dazzling—of Saxon fairness, which the slightest exercise dyed with a brilliant flush; and her toilet (a considerable item in the catalogue of a beauty) was always costly and well-chosen. Had Maud been able to dress as expensively as Miss Reynolds, and had her position been as defined, it is probable that the number of their admirers would have been equally divided. As it was, Florence was every-

where recognised as a great beauty, and Maud now and then spoken of as a pretty girl.

Florence was an accomplished coquette. She had the art, by a thousand soft and indefinite means of attraction, of increasing the effect of her personal charms ; and very few men were ever in her society without being, at least for a time, intoxicated by the singular fascination of her manner. She had already refused several proposals which she had invited by every means in her power, but which appeared to cause her very great astonishment when they really came. She could not be accused of seeking to marry ; she enjoyed too much this unprincipled use of her influence ; confident that it would be always in her power to make a splendid match when she should be weary of breaking hearts.

But among her numerous admirers, she had not one more sincere or more disinterested than Leonard Warrenne. When he first returned from Switzerland, where he had spent two or three years in acquiring the modern languages, he found himself always a welcome guest at the Ferns. Mrs. Creswick extended to him the regard she entertained for his sister ; and Colonel Creswick was glad to see any one at dinner with whom he could gossip. He was constantly inviting him, and thus he was thrown into the dangerous way of Miss Reynolds. For some time he contented himself by a distant and silent admiration of her dazzling person—but this mute worship was very little suited to the imperious taste of Florence. She suddenly thawed in her manner, which had at first partaken of the icy nature of her intercourse with his sister, and engaged him frequently in conversation, sometimes careless and airy, and sometimes verging upon the sentimental.

For some time Leonard had the comfort of imagining that he simply felt an interest in observing her character, which he fancied to be singularly engaging. He thought she was judged hardly, and misunderstood by those who pronounced her to be heartless, and artful, and vain. He considered Mrs. Creswick, with her stern and immovable ideas of integrity, to be wholly unfitted to pass judgment on the capricious and delicate shades of her niece's character. But these fine Platonic investigations ended, as they always do end—in an ardent, though in this case, hopeless attachment. He never for a moment dreamed of aspiring to the hand of the wealthy heiress—he was aware that his situation rendered such hopes out of the question. But he fancied, like a very young man, that he could remain under all circumstances devoted to her service ; that like a knight of the ancient chivalry from which he has descended, he might hold himself for ever bound to obey her slightest wish, without a hope of any future recompense. He saw that she was aware of his passion, and that she did not appear offended by a devotion at once so absolute and so unpresuming. But these fanciful visions were destined to be somewhat rudely interrupted.

Mr. Warrenne, who had for some months been looking out for a situation for his son, at length obtained one in the house of a Mr. Thomason in London. It was necessary that Leonard should set off directly to begin his duties; and the day before he left he called, as a matter of course, at the Ferns, to take leave of the Creswicks.

As he crossed the lawn to go up to the house, he saw Florence walking at a little distance under the trees, leading her pet dog by her side in a blue ribbon. A slight degree of bashfulness at the sight of his "bosom's lord" made him hesitate an instant before approaching her.

But Florence was, fortunately, oppressed by no such timidity.

"Good-morning, Mr. Leonard," said she, coming slowly towards him, and shaking hands with the most friendly air in the world. "If you did not recognise *me*, I think, at least, you might remember Fidelio!"

"It is impossible that I could fail to recognise you," said Leonard; "but I thought you might, perhaps, wish to be alone."

"Oh! I don't consider you an interruption," returned Florence, graciously.

"How well Fidelio is looking!" said Leonard. "I think his coat must now be white enough to content you; it is like swansdown."

"Yes; my present maid consents to wash him every morning. You know that was the parting point with Anaise; and Aunt Creswick vexed me so by taking her side. That is the worst of people who live in the country. They have such limited notions. But your sister is not with you to-day?"

"No," said Leonard; "she was engaged with Alice."

"I cannot tell how it is, but your sister and I do not get on together," said Florence.

A bystander might have remarked that unless Maud had a rather unusual fancy for being the recipient of all Miss Reynolds' varieties of pride and temper, it was not likely that she would get on with her very fast.

"She is afraid of you," said Leonard, smiling.

"No! but am I so very formidable?" asked Florence, with an arch smile.

"Very," replied Leonard, with expression.

Florence coloured, and turned to look after her dog.

"But you were walking?" said Leonard.

"Yes; just loitering about," returned Florence, moving towards the shrubbery as she spoke. "It is pleasanter here than in the house; don't you think so?"

"Much pleasanter," said Leonard.

"The fact is, that I was glad to made my escape from the drawing-room," resumed Florence. "We have been having rather a

cloudy interview ; a council of three upon the merits of Sir Frederic Manning."

This sort of confidence was not unusual with Florence, for, with that kind of openness which Bacon pronounces to be uncomely, she gave publicity to her affairs by discussing them with any intimate acquaintance ; nor was she, in the present instance, quite correct in her statement, for the discussion had not so much turned upon the merits of Sir Frederic, as upon the demerits of her conduct towards him ; Mrs. Creswick having taken upon herself to expostulate with her upon the undue encouragement she had given that gentleman ; while the Colonel sometimes complimented "dearest Madam" upon her delicacy and penetration, and sometimes shifted round and defended the harmless levity of his "fair, but capricious niece."

"I have not the honour of an acquaintance with Sir Frederic," said Leonard ; "but I hope his merits are very great. They should be surpassing," he added, with fervour, "if they are to meet with the success that report has assigned to him."

Florence sighed deeply, and remained silent a few moments ; and then said with a sweet smile :

"Confess, Mr. Leonard, that it is very hard to be subject to the interference of others in an affair of this nature."

"I am sure," said Leonard, with some embarrassment, "that your best friends would leave you to the decision of your own heart."

"Ah ! but my heart is so exacting, you can't imagine," cried Florence, playfully. "I demand too much ever to be happy in my future lot."

"I trust, at least," said Leonard, earnestly, "that you will never cease to remember how much power rests in your own hands."

"The enviable power of saying 'No' !" returned Florence, smiling. Then, turning towards him with an appearance of the most engaging frankness, she said, "Come, Mr. Warrenne, give me your opinion. I am sure you are a true friend. Here is a gentleman with a very large property, a title—which you know is always an advantage—an excellent character, and, for anything I know to the contrary, a tolerable understanding ; and yet I am so perverse, that I cannot manœuvre the possessor of all these advantages into an interesting point of view ! *Que faire ?*"

"You do not seriously ask my advice," replied Leonard ; and, with all his enthusiasm, he felt somewhat chilled that she should propose such a question to him ; knowing, as he felt she did, his sentiments towards herself. "I am sure that *you* must look upon a marriage of convenience with unmixed feelings of abhorrence—

"The weariest and most loathed worldly life,  
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment  
Can lay on Nature, is a Paradise"

compared to such a fate."

"But you are so romantic!" cried Florence, shaking back her long ringlets, and looking softly up to him; "I never met with such a Paladin in all my life!"

"Miss Reynolds," said Leonard, stopping short, and taking a sudden resolution, "I came to-day to take leave of you; and some freedom may, perhaps, be allowed or forgiven to me in parting. I think you have not now to learn how deeply I am devoted to your interest; nor at what expense of my own, I would, if it were possible, secure your happiness; and this—you may believe me—without a thought of ever presuming to expect from you the recompense even of a smile. It is not likely that you should ever be placed in a situation where you could derive benefit from my services; but if such a time should come, give me the pleasure—the consolation of knowing that you would call upon me for my exertions with as much frankness as if you summoned a brother to your aid."

Leonard, half frightened at his own boldness, and breathless with excitement, waited for her reply.

Florence burst into laughter.

"Really, Mr. Leonard," said she, "you exceed every hero I ever read of! I only wish I were the Princess Micomicon, that I might reply to you in the same strain! I am quite sorry that you are going; for we might have enacted quite a little melodrama together, to enliven the awful solitude of Erlsmede."

Leonard felt for an instant as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet and shivered his airy castles into fragments; and no one can describe the pain that can sometimes be compressed into a few moments.

He felt that he could have forgiven her for not loving him, but *not* for proving herself unworthy of his love. For it was unworthy to receive with scorn as sincere a tribute as was ever laid at the feet of beauty.

But he collected himself, just as the silence began to grow embarrassing.

"I have yet another favour to ask of you, Miss Reynolds," he said, calmly, "which I trust you will consider less extravagant than my last; it is, that you will kindly present my compliments to Colonel and Mrs. Creswick, and express my regret that I had not time left to bid them farewell."

Then taking off his hat, and bowing deeply, before Florence could recover from her surprise at this transition of manner, he crossed the lawn and disappeared among the trees.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE LAST NIGHT.

It was evening, and Mr. Warrenne and his family were assembled in the drawing-room. Mr. Warrenne was writing at a table by the light of a single lamp, surrounded by books and notes, by leaves of manuscript, and all the litter of an author. A beautiful branch of a tropical creeper with purple blossoms, was placed in a small jar of Bohemian glass, and fell trailing upon the table-cover.

Mr. Warrenne was engaged in a botanical work, to which he devoted almost every moment of his leisure time. He was very tall and thin, with a bald forehead—retaining much of the old-fashioned courtesy in his manner, which the remarkable gentleness of his voice and disposition prevented from being formal. He was remarkably independent in his habits; it was his way to rise and light his own fire always at four o'clock in the morning, all through the winter—and had he been ever so rich, he would very ill have borne to let it be done for him by a servant. Not a line of copy would he ever suffer Maud to transcribe either for his great work on botany, or for the numerous contributions which he sent to scientific or medical journals. He was a philanthropist in the purest and truest sense of the word—a philanthropist who did not neglect the claims of his own fireside, in an abstract zeal for the advancement of society. In his earnest endeavour to elevate the character and improve the comfort of the working classes, to which some of his smaller works were devoted, he had not forgotten to do all that is in the power of a parent to elevate and improve the characters of his own children. He had given them the best education that his utmost means would allow; and had set before them, both by precept and example, those serious duties, and that high tone of feeling, without which the most accomplished education is of little worth. The consequence was that Mr. Warrenne's children were refined—not in the fineness of their cambric handkerchiefs, or the cut glass of their dressing-cases, but in a sense of honour that in these days would be considered as fastidious, and a sensibility to the feelings of others, which is the true *morals* of good breeding, and a very agreeable substitute for etiquette.

Leonard and Maud were walking up and down the room together arm-in-arm. Alice, seated in the shade, was playing a *motivo* from one of Beethoven's masses on a very fine harmonium. Her rounded figure, her dazzling complexion, and bright rings of brown sunny hair, all looked soft and indistinct in the dim light. Leonard, although very like Maud, had not his sister's pretensions to regular beauty—his features were less critical—his complexion much darker—and his short black hair and marked brows were wanting in the splendid

texture and colouring that distinguished hers ; but he had the same brilliant eyes and glittering teeth, and his figure, hardly taller than Maud's, possessed the same elegance of form and gesture.

"What a beautiful movement that is !" said Leonard, stopping in his walk near the harmonium. "Do, Alice, play the 'Benedictus' over again."

Alice began to repeat the movement.

"You go to-morrow," said Maud, resting her head on his shoulder. "I can think of nothing else ; what *shall* I do without you ?"

"But when I was in Switzerland nearly three years, Maud," said Leonard, "you managed to do without me then ?"

"I was not so old then," said Maud ; "I did not so much feel the need of having somebody to talk to—to tell my troubles to."

"But you know, Maud, a philosopher should rely entirely on the consolations of his own mind !"

"You are like Hamlet, Leonard."

"How so ?"

"Your philosophy is just as deep as his ; you have a profound saying for every emergency, but you feel exactly like other people all the time."

Leonard smiled, and made no reply to this attack ; perhaps the little interview of the morning had taught him that it was not toothache alone that had power to unnerve a philosopher.

"I hope, papa, we don't disturb you, roaming about ?" said Maud, as they came to Mr. Warrenne's table in their promenade.

"My dear !—disturb me !" returned Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing, and bringing his ideas down by degrees to this present company ; "no, not at all, I assure you."

"Well now, Maud," said Leonard, as they crossed back to the harmonium again ; "what are your troubles at this present time ? Not any very particular ones, I think !"

"Leonard, it is so like a man to think that women have no troubles !"

"I am all attention," said Leonard, smiling ; "I only ask for information."

"Well, for instance," returned Maud, "what do you think of Miss Reynolds' behaviour to me ?"

"Miss Reynolds !" cried Leonard with a start.

"Oh, I cannot tell you how she annoys me !" said Maud, eagerly ; "fifty times I have said to myself that I would never go to the Ferns again and expose myself to the cold insolence of her manners ; but I like Mrs. Creswick too well to stay away altogether."

"Did you see Miss Reynolds this morning ?"

"Yes ; I met her in the garden"

"And how did she behave ?"

"Oh, she is a little capricious, you know."

"I understand."

"And then," continued Maud, passing to another subject, "the reports which are spread and believed against papa from time to time—don't you call that a very reasonable ground of complaint?"

"Why, in that respect, my father fares no worse than other doctors," said Leonard; "it is a profession that is calculated to make friends and foes from causes over which the individual has no control. And I agree with you, that no calumny is too extravagant to be believed, especially if it relates to an honest man."

"Very true; but it vexes me all the same," replied Maud.

"It does not vex my father, you see," returned Leonard, "when people circulate a falsehood of extra magnitude about him; he ponders a little, and then sets it down to a partial derangement of intellect on the part of the inventor. He cannot comprehend pure malignity—especially when it is unprovoked."

"He hardly knows the mischief it does him," said Maud.

"I think he does; but he treats it as he would treat a bad crop of potatoes. He would be angry with nobody. I don't think he *could* bear malice. Ah! Maud, when shall you and I have schooled our minds to such an even balance?"

"I should like to see them all burnt!" cried Maud, with a sudden burst of indignation.

Alice stopped playing in wonder; Leonard began to laugh at Maud's eager face; and Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing, said quietly:

"No, my dear, you would not," and then addressed himself to his task again.

"I thought," said Leonard, taking a seat beside Maud on the sofa, "that Miss Reynolds looked more beautiful than ever, this morning."

It seemed, that though he had resolved never to think of her again, he could not help talking of her.

"Indeed! What was her dress?" asked Maud.

"Oh, something magnificent—a silk, I suppose; of rose colour mixed with black."

"Ah! that would suit her fair complexion admirably," said Maud.

"Is she not lovely?" exclaimed Leonard.

"Very; nothing can be lovelier," replied Maud.

"And her eyes!—those long blue eyes!" exclaimed Leonard, softening more and more towards Miss Reynolds as he recalled her several attractions.

"I do not like her," said Maud, laughing; "and I have praised her enough. I shall say nothing in favour of her eyes."

"After all," said Leonard, as if thinking aloud, "what allowance should be made for her! So rich, so flattered! It is no wonder that she sometimes forgets to be considerate."

"Leonard, my dear boy," said Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing, "I wish you would have the goodness to mend me a pen."

This was one of the few things that his children could manage to do

for him, as his sight was not good enough to mend pens by candle-light. Leonard started up and went to the table.

"It is a singular thing," said Mr. Warrenne, laying down his pen, and making the papers before him straight and square, "it is a very strange fact, and one to which I wish to draw your attention, that, in the vegetable kingdom, we do not find any of the species become extinct, from time to time, as in the animal kingdom. Some specimens are, it is true, very rare, but they do not actually disappear from the face of the earth—Leonard, my dear, this pen is a little too soft—of course I do not now refer to those productions of Nature which existed prior to what is popularly called the creation of the world."

Poor Maud! This last remark brought her to her third trouble. The clergyman of the parish was on very unfriendly terms with Mr. Warrenne, because he believed, in common with Dr. Buckland and most other geologists, that the creation of the earth was antecedent, by many centuries, to the creation of man. It was not enough that he never obtruded his opinions—he held them; and Mr. Ranger hated him with a bitterness that might not seem to be very evangelical. But most people said that of course Mr. Warrenne must have done something wrong; for it was not likely that a clergyman would be prepossessed against any one without good cause.

"Ah! Mr. Ranger, Leonard!" cried Maud, who had forgotten this trouble until the mention of the creation had recalled it to her mind.

Leonard looked up smiling from his pen. "Ay, Maud," he said, "that is rather a more substantial trouble than the little airs of Miss Reynolds, or the gossip of half-a-dozen crazy old women."

"I can't think how it is that we are so beset," said Maud.

"Why, my dear, because we are poor," replied Leonard; "rich people smile and fawn on each other, but they turn their rough side to us; we don't get any of the 'hollow sunshine' some poet speaks of; and I really don't know that we are much the worse for the omission, for when we find a friend he must be sterling."

"Like Mr. Scudamore," said Maud.

"Exactly. By the way, Maud, I half expected he would have called in this evening; for when I went yesterday to bid him good-bye, he was gone to R—— on business, and now I shall go away without seeing him."

"How I shall scold him if he does not come!" said Maud. "Stay, is not that a step?"

"That is Karl coming from the stable," returned Alice. She was always an authority upon footsteps.

"Were you talking of Mr. Scudamore, my dear?" said Mr. Warrenne, looking up a few minutes afterwards.

"Yes, papa."

"I met him this morning, my dear, and he said he would breakfast

with us to-morrow, that he might shake hands with Leonard before he went."

"Oh! that is right, Leonard," said Maud. "You are sure now that you have everything ready?"

"Everything, Maud."

"How often I shall write to you! and Alice too."

"Oh, yes! Take care that Alice writes; don't let her grow lazy."

They all stood round, unwilling to break up and go to bed—the last night.

"My dears," said Mr. Warrenne, as he laid by his manuscript, "do you know what o'clock it is?"

Nobody knew, but nobody moved.

"And we must breakfast at half-past seven, because Leonard starts at eight," continued Mr. Warrenne.

"Yes, papa," said the group.

But while they were hesitating, the matter was settled by Dinah, the housemaid, who popped her round face in at the door, with the formula so familiar to the country practitioner:

"Please, sir, you are wanted."

At this well-known sound, Mr. Warrenne bade a hasty good-night to his children, and followed the round face out of the room. Leonard and Alice consented to go upstairs, and Maud sat down to wait her father's return, and to stifle her tears like a true woman, lest the sight of them should add to his regret.

## CHAPTER IV.

### STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM.

MR. SCUDAMORE was the most intimate friend of the Warrennes. He was about fifty years old; still a handsome man, of a stately figure, and a fine imposing carriage. He was remarkably good-natured—not by any means addicted to literature—but as honest and straightforward a man as ever lived. He had been formerly in the Army; but he did not seem to have felt much partiality for that profession, since he sent his two sons to India in the Company's service, and had been heard to declare that he would rather see them sweeping the streets then serving their country. And this, not from any feeling of disloyalty; but from a floating idea that they would find a good crossing a better provision than anything they might pick up under military auspices.

He had a widowed sister living with him. This lady had married a gentleman, who left behind him at his death nothing but a very large amount of debts. Mr. Scudamore had paid his brother-in-law's debts, and had offered his sister a home; and the world, which is famous for its accurate judgments, had given him a reputation for

riches, on account of an action which had greatly diminished whatever he might have before possessed. But Mr. Scudamore did not particularly care what the world said. He was a bit of a good-natured misanthrope; he took to farming with some degree of success, laughed at his sister, whose eccentricities were almost unbounded—encouraged Leonard's philosophy—admired Maud—petted Alice, and was extremely popular with Mr. Warrenne and his family. He it was who, from time to time, gladdened the heart of Mr. Warrenne with specimens of those rare and beautiful flowers which would have been out of his reach but for the zeal of his friend, and he it was who was wanting to complete the breakfast-party on the last morning of Leonard's stay, and whose coming would be positive assurance that it was actually half-past seven o'clock, for his punctuality was infallible.

The morning was bright and fresh—cool enough at that early hour to bring deep roses into Maud's cheeks; for she had been round the orchard prying at the foot of every mossy tree to collect the last violets that still lingered there, to make a cluster for Leonard. It would be long enough before he would get another, with the dew still upon it. Half-past seven would come. Alice had given notice of Mr. Scudamore's approach before any one else had detected his stately step, and Maud began to pour out the tea; not daring to look at Leonard, but trying to talk cheerfully with every one else.

"And so Leonard goes to-day?" said Mr. Scudamore, as soon as he had taken his seat at the table. It was a self-evident truth; but it filled Maud's eyes with tears notwithstanding; she turned away without making any reply.

Poor Mr. Scudamore, who had said, according to his custom, what was uppermost in his mind, and who had possibly meant his remark to be consolatory, now did his best to retrieve his error.

"Well, never mind," said he, taking her hand; "Dick will be over here one of these days."

Dick was his eldest son, in whom he imagined all human perfections to be centred. And it was a proof of his extreme partiality to Maud, that while he gave flowers to her father, and pet-birds to Alice, he always, in his mind's eye, reserved Dick for Maud; and, without exactly intending it, he was constantly apprising her of his intentions. Maud dried her eyes half smiling.

"And how is Mrs. Thorne this morning?" she asked.

"Pretty well, I fancy; the old lady is digging a pit in the cowslip meadow."

"What is she doing that for?" asked Alice.

"I don't know. She and Jack Robins were hard at work all yesterday."

"Tell her I shall come and help her one day soon," said Maud.

"Do," said Mr. Scudamore. "I shall take you both home with me—I have some ripe strawberries for Alice."



"Has the grandfather really some ripe strawberries?" asked Alice. "Why, Karl says that ours are not turning yet."

It was Maud who had fixed the venerable appellation of grandfather upon Mr. Scudamore, because, with a woman's readiness, she had detected that he was still a little vain of his fine appearance; and he bore it very well, conscious that he was many years younger than her father.

And now the coach drew up, five minutes before the hour—and happily coaches give but little time for farewells: the luggage is pounced upon, the passenger hurried in, and the pang of parting cut as short as may be.

"There, he is out of sight now!" said Mr. Scudamore to Maud, who had watched with tearful eyes the rapid progress of the coach along the road until it disappeared among the dewy hedgerows.

"Yes, he is out of sight," repeated Alice, who could no longer hear the wheels.

"What *will* he do in London?" said Maud, in a desponding tone.

"Do?" returned Mr. Scudamore, cheerfully—"make his fortune, to be sure! Come home as rich as a Jew; buy Forrel Court, when Mrs. Jane Digby pleases to shuffle off this mortal coil—and marry the prettiest woman (after yourself) in the county."

Maud had not heard distinctly the last part of this sentence, for Mr. Warrenne had stepped back into the passage to put on his great-coat, and Maud had darted in to help him on with it. Mr. Warrenne always declined this piece of service on her part, but he generally found himself invested in his garment before his sentence was quite finished. And though of course people who have no valets to put on their great-coats are, and ought to be, despised by those who have, I question if Mr. Warrenne would have been half so much pleased with the attendance of a servant as he was with that of his bright-eyed daughter.

Karl now hobbled to the front-door, leading the old white horse, and followed by a beautiful fawn-coloured greyhound, which coursed round the horse and leaped upon him, without in the least disturbing his serenity.

"Shall we take Ondine with us?" asked Maud, as she stooped to caress the greyhound.

"To be sure," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Karl!" said Maud, laughing, "you must make up your mind to go without Ondine for a whole morning."

The old German nodded; and then, drawing the tufted mane of the white horse through his rough hands, he said slowly:

"When the golden youth comes back from London with a great deal of money, the father will have a better horse to ride, young lady."

As Karl neither spoke nor understood more English than was necessary to conduct his small purchases in the village, the conversa-

tions between him and his young ladies always passed in his own language.

"Ey, ey!" repeated Karl, fastening a small steel chain to the collar of the greyhound, and handing the end of it to Alice; "never tell me that the golden youth will not be rich one day."

"But what were you saying just now, grandfather, about pretty women?" asked Maud, as they set out upon their walk.

"About pretty women? Let me see—oh! I was saying that Miss Reynolds was (next to you) the prettiest woman in the county."

"Not exactly that," said Alice. "The grandfather was saying that Leonard would marry the prettiest woman in the county when he came back."

"I hope to goodness that he will never marry Miss Reynolds," cried Maud, "though fortunately there is no fear of that. I hardly know, indeed, if she considers him even worth laughing at!"

"I should not mind taking you a heavy bet of that," said Mr. Scudamore. "Perhaps you do not recollect, Mistress Maud, that where I sit in church I have a perfect view of Miss Reynolds as well as Master Leonard, and I have caught some looks passing."

"There! we see now how the grandfather employs himself in church," said Alice.

"I always knew that he behaved very badly," replied Maud. "You know, Alice, I told you one Sunday that he was making me laugh when the child cried so loud."

"As for you," said Mr. Scudamore, attacking Maud in his turn, "the reason why you dislike Miss Reynolds is very evident; you are jealous of her."

"Oh! grandfather, jealous of Miss Reynolds!" cried Alice.

"If I were jealous of anything, it would be of her beautiful horse," said Maud; "I should so like to ride."

"When you were in India, grandfather, did you ever ride on an elephant?" asked Alice.

"Oh, once or twice; just to say that I had done so; but it is not the usual mode of travelling over there, Miss Alice."

"Alberic went on an elephant to a tiger-hunt," said Alice; "I should so like to ride on one. Oh, you do not know how I long to travel!"

"But, dear Alice," said Maud, "you would have all the fatigue, and none of the pleasure."

"None of the pleasure! Oh, Maud! think of the climate, and the scent of foreign flowers, and the numberless sounds of a tropical country; and a foreign language—only fancy how strange that would be—and the notes of the birds, and the large-leaved trees, and the stir of everything, so different to what we have here; and, of course, somebody to describe to me what was passing. How different to be told at the instant—There go the women with their muslin veils,

carrying their brazen vessels to the tank ; and there, farther on, what a flight of many-coloured birds ; and now the sky is hot and pink, and the great palm trees are as still as death, and the large white mosque in the middle of the plain is so distinct in the sunlight that you can count every arch : how different this would be on the spot, to hearing it from a book as I do."

"We must ship you out to Alberic," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing.

"I should be a troublesome visitor," said Alice, smiling.

"And, besides, I could not spare you," added Maud.

"Well, well, when Dick comes home we shall see who can be spared," remarked Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure," said Maud, "I never in my life was so tired of anybody's name as of his ; and such a name ! 'Dick !'"

"But where is Forrel Court, grandfather ?" asked Alice.

"Not know Forrel Court !" said Mr. Scudamore, "to my fancy it is the prettiest place within thirty miles ; and they say that Mrs. Jane Digby was altogether as handsome, thirty years ago."

"And who is Mrs. Jane Digby ?" asked Maud,

"What ! have you never heard your father speak of Mrs. Jane Digby ?"

"Never," returned Maud.

"Well, then, you ask him."

"But he won't tell us," said Maud.

"He never tells us any gossip," remarked Alice.

"No ; we are obliged to come to the grandfather for all the gossip of the neighbourhood," said Maud.

"And so Mrs. Digby——" continued Alice.

"No, no—a couple of children ; you have no business with such stories," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Why, is she an enemy of papa's, like Mrs. Nicholls ?" asked Alice.

"Oh no, my dear, nothing of the sort."

"Now, grandfather, don't be provoking," said Maud ; "I *will* hear it !"

"Ay, when Queen Maud says she will, there's nothing for it," said Mr. Scudamore. "Well, you must know, then, that old Digby, her father, left the most singular will ever made by man I do believe. She was his only child, and he therefore left her his whole estate and fortune, with this absurd condition—that she should forfeit it all if she ever married. Now, you know it almost looked as if the man wished his daughter to die an old maid ; for, though a handsome woman enough, few people would care to take her without so much as an acre of the property."

"Poor Mrs. Digby !" said Maud. "Not one of her admirers was true-hearted enough to stand such a test ?"

"I am sure she was better without them then," cried Alice.

"To be sure," said Maud; "only one wouldn't like to be given up"

"But what has papa to do with the story?" asked Alice.

"Ask him," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure, if papa had loved her, he would have married her without any fortune," said Maud.

"But suppose it was what you ladies call an unrequited attachment?" replied Mr. Scudamore.

"Well, and I daresay a great many ladies were attached to papa," remarked Alice simply.

"There—get in both of you," said Mr. Scudamore, putting them both in at the open gate of his garden; "at your age you know nothing at all about such matters I should hope."

"And where will you fasten Ondine that she may not worry your sheep?" asked Alice.

"Just outside the porch; she shall have some dinner when we get our luncheon."

"And some strawberries—just a few, grandfather; she loves strawberries," said Alice.

"Well, she shall have two or three. Hallo! Jack Robins! where is the old lady?"

"If you please, sir," said Jack Robins, a decent farm servant in round hat, smock frock, and leather gaiters, "missus be down in the well."

"In the well?"

"Yes, sir;" and not deeming any explanation necessary, he touched his hair and walked on.

"I suppose she is not drowned, or he would not take it so coolly," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing; "and if she likes to spend her time in the well, I know no reason why one should hinder her. But if you have no objection, we will just go and see what she is about."

They went through the garden into the wood-yard, and so on to the farm-yard, where at the other side, just in front of Jack Robins' cottage, stood the well. As they came up there emerged from the top a very old straw bonnet, tied down with an older silk handkerchief, and further, the whole person of Mrs. Thorne.

"Well, old lady," said Mr. Scudamore, "have you been down to take a peep at the stars?"

"No, brother," said that lady, bounding from the margin of the well to the ground; "but I thought some of the brickwork was loose within, so I made them put down a ladder, and looked to it myself."

"And you are not wet through, I declare," said Mr. Scudamore.

"No; I did not go so low as the water," replied Mrs. Thorne; "there's a brick fallen, brother, and you had better see about it."

Mrs. Thorne was not five feet high, as active as a bird, and an incessant talker. Her eyes were as bright and restless as a hawk's, and her features were tolerably regular. It was impossible to dress in older or more shabby clothes than she did, and this quite as a matter

of choice, for her brother would willingly have supplied her with better, if she could have been induced to put them on; and as she held the purse for house expenses, and at least once a week (according to her own account) saved him from utter ruin, she could have conducted her wardrobe upon different principles, if such had been her pleasure.

"Well, young ladies," said she, turning suddenly upon them. "Neither of you married yet? What a world it is! Nobody marries now. And yet you are not so bad looking; I don't see why you should not pick up somebody, or you either, if you would leave off pretending to be blind."

"Oh, Mrs. Thorne!" said Alice.

"Blind! look at her! No more blind than I am! see how she steers clear of that crib. Is it a cow or a horse feeding there? Eh, Miss Alice!"

"Oh! a cow, Mrs. Thorne; I know that by her breathing."

"Ah! don't tell me; you see her as well as I do. But come in, and let us get something to eat. I am as hungry as a hunter."

The strawberries and cream were ready for them when they went in, with various other good things. Mrs. Thorne did not sit down to table, but walked briskly backwards and forwards, stopping before her plate, and taking a mouthful every now and then, and talking incessantly; and it was one of her peculiarities, that she would carry on a long conversation about persons of whom her audience had never heard, and did not appear in the least annoyed when she found that they were quite in the dark as to the subject of discourse.

"I never saw you looking so well," said Mr. Scudamore as Maud laid aside her bonnet and smoothed back her exquisite hair with her hand;—"your walk has done you good; you have grown too in the last few months. I wish with all my heart that Dick was here at this moment."

"Oh dear!" cried Maud impatiently, the glow on her cheek growing deeper; "I wish you would let Dick alone from this time forth!"

"Yes, and I don't think I was ever so frightened in my life," said Mrs. Thorne, coming to a stand-still for a minute before her plate, "as the day John Butler's horse ran away with him and fell down the chalk-pit. Nobody thought that Eleanor would ever have got over it; I fancied myself she would have gone into a decline; and as Lydia had died of something of the sort, it might almost be said to run in the family; but Livingstone gave us hopes from the first, and if it had not been for that, I don't know how Mrs. Hemmings would have kept up her spirits."

As soon as she had finished this exordium, she set off again walking up and down the room; and every one present being used

to her style, it was not thought necessary to inquire who Mrs. Hemmings, and John Butler, and Eleanor and the others were. As soon as Mrs. Thorne had finished this discursive kind of meal, she drew on her tan gloves, and walked briskly off, leaving Mr. Scudamore to entertain his guests; and he took them to feed the pigeons, and see the youngest calves, and pass judgment on the horses, and pry into the barns, all which proceedings Alice seemed to enjoy quite as much as her sister.

In the course of their wanderings they came upon Mrs. Thorne, who was busy digging a kind of trench in the cowslip meadow in company with Jack Robins; which Mr. Scudamore told her looked very like a grave, and he supposed she was qualifying for the office of sexton when it should be vacant.

Mrs. Thorne flung up a spadeful of earth; told him to mind his own business; and then setting her battered straw bonnet more firmly on her head, she resumed her occupation.

Mr. Scudamore walked home with the girls, and, as they turned into the lane which led to their house, they met a gay riding-party from the Ferns.

Miss Reynolds was among the foremost, on a pretty, slight bay horse; and by her side rode a foreign count, with a formidable beard, to whose discourse she seemed to incline a very attentive ear.

Florence never looked handsomer than on horseback. Her high, close habit set off the outline of her beautiful figure, and the cloud of thick, fair curls that escaped from her hat, gave an air of softness to that masculine *coiffure*. She bowed, coldly enough, as she passed on, and, turning to the Frenchman, made some remark on Maud which seemed to amuse him very much. The little colonel, who was behind with some ladies, reined up, and bestowed some compliments on the sisters, mixed with sly insinuations on Mr. Scudamore for securing such fair companions in his walks.

"And how anybody can think," said Maud, as soon as the colonel was out of hearing, "that Leonard ever cared one straw for that horrid Miss Reynolds—except, indeed, allowing her to be handsome, which we all do."

"And defending her, Maud; you know he always defended her," returned Alice.

"And looking at her in church—I will answer for that part of the story," cried Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure, if he ever did think of her, I hope he will forget her very name, now he is away from her," said Maud.

"And bring home a rich bride from the ward of Farringdon Without," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Well, that would be one way to shorten his servitude in the great city," laughed Maud, as they reached their gate, and Karl came forward to take charge of his favourite Ondine.

(To be continued.)



## AN ARTIST'S ROMANCE.

## I.

IT was so hot that the oleanders flagged, hanging their pink and white blossoms downwards, in their large green tubs, lower and lower, till they almost touched the curly head of an American girl who sat dreaming under their shade in the balcony they ornamented.

But dreaming is too sentimental a term to apply to any reverie of Maraquita Ward's. Calculating would be a truer expression. She was rehearsing mentally her future plans, while turning over the leaves of her sketch-book, a clever summary of her own smart intellect in grasping sights and scenes.

Her meditations were noisily interrupted by the cling-cling of several bicycles, and down the dusty road, in the full glare of the Italian sunshine appeared, flashing in many coloured "blazers," a robust party of young Englishmen, sent abroad to perfect their education. "Cling, cling," came their bells, and "Cooe, cooe!" shouted their stalwart riders, as with a sudden jerk the bicycles were checked in their wild career through the Piazzetta, in front of its little café.

In a polyglot of their own composing, they demanded of the startled waiter, "drink," "forthwith," and "in buckets;" while the padrone inside, suddenly aroused from his siesta, blinked, and seized his hat, making for the entrance, but was reassured by his subordinate's laconic but perfectly satisfactory explanation, that it was only some thirsty "Inglese."

How well Maraquita knew it all! The Bersaglieri who played dominoes on the bridge, near the group who twanged a mandoline, singing to its accompaniment with their rich Italian voices; the queenly peasant girls coming up from the stream, with their copper pitchers poised on their beautiful upright heads; the old beggar rattling his tin money-box and proclaiming his doubtful blindness; the fruit-seller surrounded by gorgeous melons and golden figs. Colour, music,<sup>1</sup> beauty everywhere.

For two years Maraquita had lived in this atmosphere of life and sunshine, and the time had come now when she was to leave it all, for so her mother had decreed, and against Mrs. Ward's decisions Maraquita knew there was no appeal. Besides, her own opinion coincided with her mother's, and the only question was, how best to put her two years' experience to practical account. Her history may be briefly told. The American war had ruined Mr. Ward, who died fighting on the Southern side; his wife, with her only child, immediately left New Orleans. Mrs. Ward was a Northerner, and

penetrated with the conviction that life without dollars is only a blank. She appealed to her rich brother in New York, and extorted from him, conditionally, a good allowance for three years, ostensibly for the purpose of cultivating in Italy Maraquita's talent for painting, her real intention being that the girl's remarkable beauty should procure her a wealthy husband in the Old World, where beauty is becoming a rarer commodity than in the New.

Maraquita entered fully into her mother's plans, and while working for pleasure, undeniably hard, at her painting, never for an instant intended to toil or spin through life, from necessity.

But now she had before her that evening a trial even beyond her stoical endurance. She felt the struggle coming to her, when love must be sacrificed to ambition; and as she watched the shadows lengthen, she knew when night fell she should have said good-bye to the brightest days of her life.

Mrs. Ward had spent that afternoon on the sofa with her novel, to which she had given a very divided attention; over and over again she asked herself if Maraquita would "behave sensibly" and "not make a scene?" As the hours waned she grew very nervous lest Maraquita should be "weak," as she expressed it; the young man must be interviewed, &c., but she should be thankful when it was over; for did not Mrs. Ward's future ease and comfort depend on her daughter's common-sense in refusing a poor suitor and accepting a rich one?

Even while she thus reflected, the knock at the door was followed by the entrance of "the young man" in person.

Mrs. Ward's worldly handsome face fell, as her hard cold eyes met the frank winning smile of Giuseppe Lanni, the artist. Like all people possessed of an inordinate craving for wealth, she found it impossible to realize that others existed to whom money was not of the same paramount importance; she believed that, once made cognisant of Maraquita's real circumstances, Lanni would relinquish all thoughts of making her his wife. But one glance at his honest guileless countenance told Mrs. Ward how hopeless was any such expectation. Seeing, however, that she must say something, she faltered:

"You had my letter? You have come to say good-bye?"

"I received your letter," he replied steadily; "and I have come, with your consent, never to say good-bye."

What Mrs. Ward would have answered it is useless to surmise, for a voice from the balcony, in clear, decided tones, called, "Come here, Lanni;" adding: "You can trust me, mother."

Seated side by side for the last time, as Maraquita instinctively felt, her heart sank; what she had intended for flirtation had gradually become serious, till love was part of her life. She remembered how little by little the master had become the friend, and how, even though he knew all, that she was poor and almost friendless, he offered her all he had, his great love and devotion. Oh, how he

pleaded ; telling her that he felt for her sake he should win fame and wealth. But she never hesitated.

"Lanni," she replied, "do you remember once I told you that I should like to repair the Psyche, and build up the Coliseum? how horrified you were, and how you said you were thankful I had neither the money nor the power to desecrate by such restoration? And you couldn't understand me then, and you would not understand me now. For me there must be no broken statues, no crumbling ruins ; my life must be full of riches ; nothing sordid or shabby ; that I love you I admit, but I am already tired of poverty and contrivances. I realise, however, thoroughly the unselfishness of your character, and the genuineness of your affection, and so I appeal to your kindness. We are going to Paris, where I shall give lessons in painting ; your name and introduction will secure my success. Will you give me recommendations to English and American families, as a pupil of yours?"

He bowed, adding, "The letters shall be with you to-night." Then rising, he said with much dignity, "Good-bye, Maraquita. Thank you even now for the love and happiness you have given me. You will live to be a great lady, I shall be a great artist ; but above your riches, and above my art, reaching beyond the grave, will remain our remembrance of each other. Give me one kiss, *comé ricordo*."

With the hot tears raining down her face Maraquita looked up, but he was gone.

When Mrs. Ward reappeared, she inquired if the parting was over.

"Yes," said the girl, whose face was white as her white dress, "we have said good-bye."

Later that evening the servant brought in a bouquet of oleanders, Maraquita's favourite flower, as well as the promised introductions :  
*"da parte del Signor Giuseppe Lanni."*

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The long winter that followed gave place to a glorious spring. Never had Paris looked gayer or more brilliant than when the young bicyclists aforementioned arrived there, having "done" Italy entirely to their own satisfaction. All their reminiscences were founded on roads. "We could not bicycle there," or "What a run we got that day!" So they discussed the state of the road to Fiesole, too hilly for their machines they said, and the Appian Way, and the Street of the Tombs, with the keen appreciation of surveyors. Thus had they travelled through the land of poetry, leaving famine behind them at sundry cafés, and seeing Florence, Rome, and Naples with the rapidity born of this century of haste.

In the Champs Elysées just now a lively discussion was going on amongst them, as to the whereabouts of a certain picture then being exhibited, and which "*tout Paris*" was crowding to see. It was the work of a comparatively unknown artist, who by this one success had gained fame and fashion.

A royal duke had bought it for a very large sum, and as H.R.H.

was known as a good judge of art, his lead was being followed, and commissions poured in upon the fortunate painter.

The cyclists had heard all this at *table d'hôte*; and "Madame" at the Bureau of their hotel, had recommended them not to leave Paris without inspecting this *chef-d'œuvre*; so they had started, with a most imperfect understanding of Madame's directions, though during her voluble explanation they had chorused "*je comprends*" at intervals.

After much consolation and several fresh and false starts, they were fortunate enough to encounter an English groom who understood instantly what they wished to see. He proceeded to give directions, which followed, soon brought them to their goal, and they found themselves in a room containing only one picture. But what a picture! "Stunner!" faltered on the lips of the most audacious; and in the breathless silence of that crowded room, the homage of perfect stillness was paid to Giuseppe Lanni's masterpiece.

It represented a girl of extraordinary beauty standing in a balcony. Her white dress, and whiter face, shone out in the twilight; with one foot she crushed a bouquet of white oleanders, while in her hand she held a tiara of flashing diamonds; by her side in a casket of pale blue velvet lay other priceless jewels, giving colour to the otherwise white picture. On the dull gold of the frame was inscribed its name:

"*A Daughter of Earth.*"

## II.

GO for money to St. Petersburg, for fashion to Paris, for pleasure to Rome, for celebrity to London! And so Giuseppe Lanni found—the favourable verdict of London had meant fortune to him.

Installed in a fine West-end studio, honorary member of the most artistic clubs, received as an honoured guest in the best society, popular and admired, nothing seemed wanting to the happiness of the young artist, who now realised to the full that "*Chi ha arte da per tutto ha parte*;" for everywhere he was welcome, while rich patrons smoothed away pecuniary anxieties, and made him feel the days too short for fulfilling his many commissions.

The studio was one of many studios under the same roof in a fashionable quarter—their separate rental represented the income of many a hard-worked curate—but Lanni had been well advised, he must keep himself *en évidence*, advertise himself in this sensational age. Amongst his many acquaintances, he had formed only one real friendship, a brother artist, named Morrison, whose studio was opposite his own. The big oak-doors faced each other and were divided only by a passage.

It was Morrison who sat with him on a lovely summer afternoon. The sun had managed to shine brightly, even through the London skylight, and Morrison had come in to bask in its rays, smoke with

his friend, and discuss a large party he had been present at the night before ; for the season was at its height.

"It was hot, and no mistake," Morrison continued, "and the rooms were crammed. They had got a cannibal king on view, a queer-looking fellow, almost as lightly draped as the women, but not so well painted. He has an island in some unheard-of ocean ; and while our Government annexes it and makes things generally comfortable, lest he should interfere while they are arranging his affairs, His Majesty is sent over with a missionary to see how England is worked. Here, he is positively beginning to prefer plovers' eggs and champagne to the repasts of his own kingdom. But, upon my word, it was ridiculous to see the smartest women in the room quite fetched by him ; 'so interesting,' 'so fine-looking,' and mobbing his missionary for an introduction (*presentation* I should say) to a nigger ! It made me quite sick——"

"You were jealous," interrupted Lanni, laughing.

"Jealous !" repeated Morrison, with withering contempt. Not I—though talking of jealousy some people do have luck, Lanni, the devil's own luck is the word. Last winter in Paris I met, copying in the Louvre—that Madonna of Botticelli's that you raved about, you know—well, a girl was copying it too. She was a pretty girl, I admit. Well, last night I met Aubusson—you know him, clever enough, but an infernal little gossip ; so he began running over the Paris news—mentioned the hit your picture had made, by the way—then he said, *à propos* of pictures, 'Do you recollect the girl copying the Botticelli ? She has married St. Erne. I saw them go off after the ceremony from our Embassy by special to Cherbourg, where his yacht, the *Cymodoce*, awaited them.'"

"Who is St. Erne ?" inquired Lanni, whose attention was divided between his easel and his companion.

"St. Erne ! why, my dear fellow, St. Erne is a peer. St. Erne is a millionaire. St. Erne is also an idiot ; but all the better for his sister's drawing-mistress, the girl who has married him, Maraquita Ward."

It is believed by some, that at our last supreme moment, our lives, or rather the principal events of our lives, will pass in review before us, as in a panorama. To Lanni that moment seemed to have come, for he saw, as in a vision, Maraquita with all her charms, the brightness of Southern beauty, embellished by the background of his own beautiful land, irradiated by happiness and his love, standing before him. No wonder that Morrison, startled by the deadly pallor of his friend's face, rushed for water, and when the housekeeper, who presided over the cleanliness of the studios, and the respectability of "her gentlemen," appeared at his summons, she too, frightened, exclaimed :

"Oh, sir ! why, Mr. Lannay, you look like a ghost. Oh, sir, what is it ?"

With a strong effort Lanni replied, "It is my heart I think. Sometimes I feel like this when I stand too long painting in the heat.

Thank you, Morrison ; thank you, Mrs. Smith ; I will lie down now, I shall soon be better."

\* \* \* \* \*

The London season has come to an end, and Lanni is starting, not for a holiday, but for another school to work in, and this time not alone, for Morrison accompanies him ; and they have chosen Brittany with its rocky coast, its Celtic monuments, and its picturesque people for their out-of-door studio. They have reached Douarnenez now, and are sketching the sea in all its varied moods. Lanni is preparing a pendant to his first success, another commission from his royal patron, and is full of anxiety lest this second essay should not equal the first.

One evening, as they were returning from the shore of the bay, Morrison stopped suddenly and pointed to a girl kneeling before a large, rough image of the Virgin and Child. The girl's white dress suggested her first communion, and in her hand was the offering : a bunch of wild flowers.

It was a striking scene, the sun's last rays fell on the partly-bowed head, the sea behind a leaden grey, the sky purple with a coming storm.

Seizing the idea at once, Lanni sketched in the outlines, remarking in a tired voice : "The air is heavy with this tempest, and I am so wearied to-night ; all the same, your idea is first-rate, Morrison, and I can see how this can be utilised for the Duke's commission admirably."

And so impressed was Lanni that he worked all evening till Morrison lost patience, and said he deserved to spoil the whole thing—"working at it in all those different lights, by Jove !" the more vexed that he was struck by the paleness of Lanni, and the look of overwrought excitement as he finally threw himself on his little iron-bedstead, still contemplating the easel where reposed the unfinished sketch.

That night there raged a storm so fearful, so dire in its effects, that to this day the pious Bretons cross themselves when they recall it. The thunder pealed, the lightning flashed as if all the batteries of earth were discharging in the firmament of heaven. At intervals the rain poured like a rushing cascade down the steep pavements of the little town.

According to Lanni, sleep was impossible, and he remained wide awake all night ; but Morrison persists in maintaining that in an overwrought state of mind he dreamed what follows, and that somnambulism explains what is otherwise inexplicable.

Lanni says that suddenly the storm ceased, and that the silence that followed could be felt. The moon shone through the clouds, with so bright a light, that he plainly distinguished a figure standing near his easel, while a slight noise made him aware of something gliding over the surface of his canvas. Without the slightest touch of the



supernatural, gazing at the picture the figure stood for several minutes, and then turned towards Lanni. In that look he recognised at once the face of all others he never forgot, that of Maraquita. With a gentle sigh she turned towards him, and he was conscious of a touch on his hand like the brush of a butterfly's wing.

After that he remembers nothing till he was awakened by his friend's loud stirring tones, as Morrison tried to rouse him.

"Why, Lanni, how you have slept! past ten o'clock. Come along, old fellow," he added in a subdued tone; "and when you have had breakfast we'll go and have a look at the sea; there's been a wreck of some English yacht, and I fear every soul on board has perished."

No need to say more; Lanni realised it all, even before they had mingled with the crowd gazing seawards, where, holding in his hand a broken spar just washed up by the surf, stood a Breton sailor, spelling out the word *Cymodoce*.

"C'est bien là le yacht du Milor Anglais," he remarked; "l'on voit que l'argent n'y fait rien, et que malgré les richesses l'on meurt de la même façon;" while an old woman exclaimed: "Eh, ma foi! en les voyant se promener ici au port Lundi, je me disais bien, Milor n'est pas beau, mais Miladi est crânement gentille."

Lanni turned to Morrison, and said hoarsely, "We'll go back." And in silence they returned to their lodgings and entered the room where Lanni had slept. Approaching the easel Morrison cried out in surprise:

"Why, old fellow, have you been painting all night? When did you fill in that face and those flowers?"

Lanni, who was looking out of the window, turned round and stood near his friend. The girl still knelt at the shrine, but the outstretched hand held now a bouquet of white oleanders, and transfigured as the face of an angel, with a hitherto undreamed-of sweetness, shone the well-known countenance of Maraquita.

\* \* \* \*

Lanni's fame is world-wide; he has left England, and lives now in his own country, where the rushing little stream still makes music amidst the silver green olive trees and chestnut groves, and where he is surrounded by *Contadini* who live again in the pictures he loves to paint.

Morrison often visits him, and he alone is permitted to unveil a hidden picture, before which a heavy silk curtain is always drawn. Morrison says it is the finest production of the great painter, and that the world is poorer for not gazing on the rare beauty of—

"A Daughter of Heaven."

## THE LOST IDEAL.

## I.

MIRANDA was a charming little girl of seventeen ; she was also a bundle of contradictions—cultured and crude, clever and foolish, sentimental and very much alive to the ridiculous. She was also extremely pretty, in the Irish way, which is perhaps the prettiest way in the world. Her father, the Rector, was Irish, and he and all his family were genial, cheery folk, who laughed and grew fat. Miranda was rather ashamed of her own keen sense of fun, which belonged, she supposed, to her "lower nature." She liked to pose to herself as Earnest, with lofty ideals of life, love, and the dignity of womanhood.

Indeed, an ideal Ferdinand (she always thought of him as "Ferdinand") already haunted her maiden meditations—an adorable being, undreamed of in maturer philosophy ; a splendid guest, to whom the doors of her heart were to fly open ; a Ferdinand who seemed, alas ! very unlikely to be cast on the shores of her conventional and dreadfully comfortable little existence.

One September day the beaming Rector, whose beams had never been obscured except when his only child's mother died, ten years before, called to Miranda from his study window.

"Chick !" cried he. He often called her "Chick," and she did not mind much, although the dignity of womanhood might be a little hurt.

Miranda, who was walking in the garden with a rough-edged, parchment-bound poet, stopped and looked up.

"Chick, would you like to come to London with me for a week ?"

"Yes, papa," said she, in a little languid voice, and with a dreamy gaze beyond him into infinity.

She had very nearly jumped for joy, but recollected the dignity of womanhood in time, and waited until she got into her own room. Then she did.

They went to the house of her father's sister in London. She was a rich and lively old maid, then gaily curing a back-ache at some German baths, and spending most of her time with much cheerfulness up to her chin in them.

The happy old parson, who did not often give himself a holiday, enjoyed it thoroughly, and so did Miranda. He took his chick to all the amusing things that were to be had in September, and that were respectable. Among others to a clever burlesque, where Miranda entirely forget culture, dignity, and ideals, and sixty and seventeen laughed together till they cried.

One morning the Rector had to go into the City on business, and

left Miranda all alone. She meant to recline in an easy-chair and read Browning; but she got rather strained over "*Sordello*," which many who can run cannot read.

Now Miranda, reclining in her easy-chair, found it so much easier than Browning that she fell asleep.

She was shocked at herself when she awoke and found the poet prone at her feet. However, she got up, stretched her arms, and thought she would explore the three drawing-rooms in search of new toys and curiosities, of which her aunt was a great collector.

She came to the smallest room at the end; and even as she crossed the threshold, her eyes fell on—a face! She stopped short, then went forward with clasped hands and stood to gaze. It was only the photograph of a very handsome young man, stuck into the last leaf of a photograph screen standing on a little table; but in that moment Miranda thought she foretasted the rapture of a realised ideal. In those dark eyes she seemed to read genius and sweetness; in that counterfeit presentment she seemed to recognise the Ferdinand of her dreams.

Almost shyly she slipped the fateful carte out of the little screen, without even a glance at its companions there. The image had no superscription; the upper and lower edges of the mount had been pared away to admit of its insertion in the screen. This only added the fitting touch of mystery.

Miranda could not bring herself to replace and resign what seemed almost sacredly her own, almost heaven-sent. She put the heaven-sent Ferdinand into her pocket; and when the Rector and his daughter went home to the Rectory, Ferdinand went too.

Thereafter Miranda spent much time in contemplation of that sun-pictured face. In point of fact it was a badly-executed photograph, for there was a mazziness in some of the outlines, a want of finish in some of the details. This, however, enhanced its significance in Miranda's eyes, and appeared to her to imply a peculiar value in the portrait as a portrait, independent of its merits as a work of art.

Perhaps (she sometimes fondly conjectured) the original was some young poet, hiding himself from fame, holding himself aloof with proud fastidiousness, far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife. The portrait had probably been obtained by stealth by some worshipping amateur photographer.

Miranda passed the winter in trembling expectation, half hoping, half dreading that her aunt would, in some of her letters, allude to the missing treasure, and at the same time tear the veil from its mystery; but no such enlightenment came, and in May Miranda was to go and stay in London with her father's sister.

Meanwhile, only two things happened to her at the Rectory. One was her eighteenth birthday, the other an offer of marriage from her father's curate, which it need scarcely be said that she refused, affianced as she felt herself to her ideal.

The curate was a good young man—handsome, too, with good brains, good heart, and good expectations. He was devoted to Miranda, and his sober fancy had never pictured anything so fair and sweet as this reality. She liked him very much indeed, appreciated his pleasant talk, his pleasant ways; but it was quite impossible to idealise him.

The poor young ecclesiastic was very unhappy when she refused him. He never smiled again for at least a week. Then he pulled himself together, went about his business manfully, and, being fond of a certain old versicle, hummed it to himself as he went:—

“Quit, quit for shame! this will not move,  
This cannot take her;  
If of herself she will not love,  
Nothing will make her”—

\*            \*            \*

Need I say that this excellent young clergyman never hummed the last line of that old versicle, which I also carefully suppress?

## II.

IN May Miranda (and Ferdinand) went to London, where the pretty country girl was a good deal admired and enjoyed herself very much. Indeed, she was pronounced bewitching; there was no monotony about her, and there was a touch of innocent coquetry. Truth to say, Ferdinand faded a little from her thoughts at this time, as photographs are apt to fade. Still, no gilded youth had pushed him from his place.

Soon after she reached her aunt's house, Miranda had gone into that third room; but everything there was differently arranged, and the photograph screen had disappeared. She dared ask no questions about it.

One day at breakfast her aunt read a letter that seemed to give her considerable pleasure.

“Me dear,” said she, “Charlie's coming.”

“Who is Charlie?” asked Miranda, who had never heard of him before.

“Me dear,” replied her aunt rather solemnly, “Charlie is the son of me first and only love; the man I should probably have married if he hadn't preferred some one else.”

“Oh, poor auntie!” said Miranda, with ready sympathy.

“Not at all, me dear! I should have been poor if I'd married him, for he would have spent all me money. He married a richer woman, and spent all hers.”

“And is he alive now?”

“No, me dear—both dead long ago. He got himself killed by a tiger out in India, and it killed her too. Not the tiger, but the loss

of her husband. Indeed then, she was far fonder of him than I ever was. Some well-off uncle looked after their boy, and got him into the F.O. He's been in Canada these three years, and now he writes me word he's coming home, and will be in London next week. So sit ye down, Miranda child, and send him a card for me dance next Thursday."

Miranda did as she was bidden in a little flutter of agitation. An exquisite possibility had occurred to her. Could this be the original? Could Charlie be Ferdinand?

"Is—is he nice, auntie?" she asked tremulously.

"Well, me dear, you'll soon see for yourself. Oh, yes! Charlie's nice enough, but not so nice or so handsome as his poor father, me first and only love. However, that's ancient history now; and there's no doubt I should have been a tried woman. Goodness knows I never grudged him to his wife, and maybe if I'd married him I mightn't have grudged him to the tiger quite as much as she did."

Thursday came; the guests came—more than could ever get upstairs. Charlie arrived early and did get upstairs. His hostess, glorious in green velvet and diamonds, pounced on him, took both his hands, and kissed him before the assembled multitude.

Presently Miranda made her appearance, and, being effusively introduced to each other, they went off to the ballroom together. Miranda's heart beat a little faster when they met; for one moment she had seemed to recognise the beautiful dark eyes of Ferdinand. But ah, no, no! That round foolish face inclined to be chubby, that nose inclined to be snubby, that wide mouth for ever widened by a schoolboy grin! Hyperion to a satyr! And as for those eyes, there was no speculation in them, and it would have been difficult indeed to find genius and greatness in their shadows, thought Miranda, as Charlie prattled inanely at her side.

Miranda went to bed that night vaguely disappointed and unhappy, and had a painful dream of a distorted Ferdinand photographed on a spoon. Charlie came to luncheon next day. Miranda was tired and a little cross; she found him horribly uninteresting. Nice? How could auntie say he was nice? He had not two ideas; he chattered like an ape and was quite as ugly; his eyes were not the least like Ferdinand's. He was an impostor; he bored her; she wished he would go. He and her aunt had all the talk to themselves; Miranda sat by silent and glum, and said she had a headache. She was only half conscious that Charlie was babbling and bragging of his exploits on the ice in Canada; she only half heard what he said when he asked her aunt if she had ever got the photos he sent her a year before.

"Nine of our skating club and the—what do you call it?—you know——"

"Oh, yes," said her aunt; "I got them, and put them all into a photograph screen. It used to stand on a table in the third room

up-stairs. I dare say it's somewhere up there now. Let us go and look for it."

"Photograph screen!" The words woke up Miranda like a pistol-shot. At last—at last! And what was going to happen? Was her sin to find her out? No, she would never confess; but she felt very guilty, and shook in her shoes. However, she managed to walk up-stairs in them behind her aunt, with Charlie at her heels.

In the third room her aunt pulled open the drawer of a cabinet. "Here it is?" said she, "folded up as flat as a pancake"—and she gave it to Charlie, who unfolded it.

"Yes," cried he, with his wide laugh, "here we all are! But, I say, where's the—the—combination—composite—what d'you call it? Nine of us blended into one, you know—the new dodge. What's become of it? Awfully handsome fellow we made, too. Bit of Brown, bit of Jones, bit of me. By Jove! What's the matter? Are you ill? Here, sit down. Where's the eau-de-Cologne?"

Miranda sat down. She did feel a little faint for an instant while she realised the fatal truth, and Ferdinand melted into space; but then the suppressed fun in her "lower nature" jumped up like a Jack-in-the box on the phantom heels of the vanishing Ferdinand, and she went off into peals on peals of inextinguishable laughter. They were rather frightened; her aunt slapped her hands, Charlie emptied a bottle of eau-de-Cologne over her, and I am afraid she slapped *him*.

"Me poor child," said her aunt, "she's hysterical!"

"I'm nothing of the sort," gasped Miranda, trying to stop laughing, going off again, and speaking in spasms. "Oh, oh, oh! it's too, too, too funny! Oh, oh, oh! that I—should fall in love—with nine men—at once! No, no, no! with nine—bits of men! Oh, oh, oh! a thing—of shreds and—patches! Oh, oh, oh, oh! shall I ever, ever, ever stop laughing?"

\* \* \* \*

Miranda went home in July, a merrier and a wiser girl. In October she married her faithful curate, whose only rival had been Ferdinand.



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"LET ME PRESENT YOU," SAID MRS. CRESWICK; AND THE CEREMONY  
WAS PERFORMED.

